
HURONTARIA 1998-A

Jan B. Hurych

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The Literary Magazine.

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Commentary:

Life in the fast line - is that all there is? Is our life really so short that we do not have time to sit down and think it over until it is too late? It reminds me an old story about baboons:

Somewhere down in Africa, there is a solitary tree on the hill, full of monkeys. They have nothing better to do than to sit on the tree, swing their legs and discuss the weather. Suddenly, one of them jumps to the ground and runs down the hill like crazy. Immediately, all monkeys follow his example. After a while, the first monkey unexpectedly halts, but the whole herd keeps on running - they run him over and trample our poor fellow to death. Only one monkey returns back to him and asks in disbelief: "Why on earth did you have to stop?" "Well, "explains the dying monkey," I just realized I didn't know where I was going..."

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"Yes, a fellow named Darwin and it is called 'The Ovulation of Specials'.."

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OTHER DIMENSIONS: CAD's NINE LIVES

No, that is not spelling error and no, it does not mean Computer Assisted Doodling. Some say the letter D stands for Design, the others will swear it means Drafting. Then there is CADD, which most likely incorporates both. CAD, feared by many, but also overestimated by many more. Ask the designer who is using it - especially when it does not do exactly what he (or she) wants - and you learn that is just "a pain in neck" or even lower. But ask him (her) if he (she) will go back to the old ways - you know, with paper and pencil - and you get definite NO. Why? Because CAD is here to stay, and like the proverbial cat, CAD really does have nine lives (or was it nine tails?). Sometimes, if he is caught off guard, you can even see our designer petting his favourite mouse a talking to "that thing". So here is an invisible attachment between our mouse and its master, something similar to that umbilical cord. Long gone is the time people were afraid that CAD could make designers obsolete, but it surely made the good old title of "draftsman" vanish...

Now comes the catch: the new machines have - or rather claim to have - some built-in intelligence. Of course you will not get the definition of intelligence from me, no Sir, I am smarter than that. Let just say that those machines will have truly artificial - not just superficial - intelligence. But then again, they will be "only" assisting us and we people will always have the last word - even if it means to change the program or to pull the plug, as the last resort. The real problem however remains: how far we should go in letting machines do what we want them to do or rather what they are able to do?

We should be always in control and I do not mean just by typing commands. We should be able to entrust computers with very complicated tasks, provided we could be confident they'll do it right. How do we gain such confidence? Well, by testing, testing, testing...

Still, there is another problem: when you feel you have the program debugged, somebody comes and makes more changes - call it new revision or version or release, whatever pleases you most. Murphy's brother once said:" Every single solution of a problem creates at least two more problems." Let us not fool ourselves - fast and powerfull computers can do more powerful mistakes and also faster than we could. This is surely no news to you and I don't need to ask you how did you find out. Of course we cannot blame it all on computer and we will never succeed if we only try to fix *computer* problems. So what should we do?

We have to use our common sense - not so easy endeavor. "We want computers do more so people can do more" was once motto of Sperry Univac company, where I used to work. They did not say " We want computers do everything", no Sir, they were not that ambitious and neither should we. Come to think of it, I just can't imagine an article like this being written by computer. They have no sense of humor, you know, at least not yet - thanks heaven.

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LIFE: THE LAUGHING COW

On the 1st of July, the people of Canada are celebrating their state holiday, appropriately called Canada Day. The group of lady-teachers from the School of Saint Sebastian decided to celebrate it by giving a party and the place they chose was Mary's house.

It was convenient, since their men would be celebrating somewhere else and without them, they could engage in those so called "girls talks". As it happens, it was supposed to be a potluck, that is every lady had to bring something for a bite, sort of a snack, if you know what I mean.

Mary was the hostess, she took care of drinks, but there were no alcoholic beverages. That was a "no-no", especially after one party, where Liz took too much of a drink, stumbled and broke Mary's best china.

It was five of them: Mary, Helga, Charlotte, Emily and already mentioned Elizabeth. Please try to remember that number, it is very important for our story. Helga brought open face sandwiches with white crab spread, Charlotte made the Nanaimo bar and Emily ordered cold cuts from the nearest deli.

And Liz - she brought nothing but trouble. Not that she intended to, but some people are

like that: whatever are they doing, it turns into a disaster. It happened like this: when Liz open her package, they all could see the box, full of little cubes of cheese, otherwise called *La vache qui rit*, The Laughing Cow. Each of those cubes was wrapped in aluminum foil and had on its face little picture of a smiling cow, apparently for those, who couldn't speak french.

You have to understand: it was made in France and the manufacturer didn't bother to translate the name in any other language, because he wasn't sure if the cows of other countries were laughing at all. Even if they were, he thought, they certainly couldn't laugh so much as french cows, who knew that their milk would be turned into these miniature cubes and arranged in the box the way napoleonic soldiers were lined up before the battle.

There were 3 rows of cubes in each row and 8 cubes in a row. These numbers also play very important role in our story. The cubes were of different flavour, which made them even more tempting and since they were really small, you could grab quite a few of them without looking too greedy. As I already mentioned, it must have been the devil himself, who whispered in Elisabeth's ear the idea about bringing *La vache qui rit* to their party. Well, it went like this: Charlotte, who teaches mathematics, immediately commented: "But 3 times 8 is 24, which can surely be divided by numbers 3, 4, 6, and 8, but unfortunately not by number 5. I mean without the remainder, which of course means that each of us will get 5 cubes, except for one unfortunate person."

Mary - who is a teacher of history, strongly disagreed: "Girls, remember that we are here celebrating our great country od democracy, democracy without discrimination of any kind. We cannot let that happen to one of us. No, we have to be just and equal, I insist." She didn't mention who was that "one of us", but everybody present understood the hint.

And it was Helga, who replied: "I agree. Why should Emily suffer the injustice? Just because she is the youngest of us?" Of course Helga teaches natural sciences, so she is more comfortable with the subject of apes rather than with the psychology.

Charlotte glanced at Helga and shook her head in disbelieve: "How could you possibly be so indiscreet?" At that momemt Emily stood up and said: "It is true that I am the youngest, but I think that the real reason is that you all hate my subject, social sciences. Just try to be honest and admit that. And sure, keep you darn cube, I am not THAT hungry!"

"But that's a nonsense!" interjected Helga and she turned to Liz: " I believe we do have here people, who are on the diet, because they are teaching physical education. It would be for the common good, if they would volunteer." She talked in plural, but there was

only one person present, who fit the description and again, all persons present knew it very well.

"Girls, girls - please don't argue!" exclaimed Charlotte, because she already sensed the coming storm, all thanks to her mathematical statements. "Look, if we divide each of those 4 odd pieces into 5 parts, we get 20 very very small pieces, which could be then divided by number 5." And she tried to do exactly that, with very little success however. The only result was one deformed cube, probably because the knife was too dull for such a delicate operation. Quickly, she offered it to Emily with words of comfort: "Here, take it, I will gladly part with it!"

Poor Emily looked at the crippled cube with horror and then suddenly ran to the bathroom, crying. "Now you see what you have done!" said Helga to Liz and added: "I do not want my piece either, here - you can have it," with the expression of mother sending her last son to the battle.

Liz ran into the dining room, picked the telephone and called her husband: "Bobby darling, could you please buy another box of *La vache qui rit* you bought for me yesterday? It is terribly important!" Well, as you can imagine, Bob was together with his colleagues, celebrating in their manly manner, that is by drinking beer. You can imagine he wasn't too pleased, when he told the guys: "Boys, you have to excuse me for a while, my wife needs me badly." Somebody asked: "And may we know what is so urgent that you have to go right now?" And they all laughed and made comments. But they gladly let him go, being too busy opening another sixpack.

In the meantime, Mary's husband Jack came home to retrieve his whistle. He was a volunteer football coach for the local elementary school and couldn't perform without it. And then unavoidable happened: he saw the box of *La vache qui rit*, took two of those cubes and apparently without thinking started to peel the foil from one of them. To add injury to the insult, he picked two best flavours: ham and asparagus.

The ladies present were staring at him in disbelief: here he was, eating their cheese, without even asking a permission! All that while they were fighting each other, since they were not able to solve their dilemma! Charlotte said, with the sadness of a lonely orphan: "24 minus 2 is 22..." Now even Jack got the message and tried to put the unwrapped piece back in the box. Mary, who knew him well, stopped him just in right time: she pushed his hand back to his mouth, without giving him any option.

At the same time, she exclaimed: "Girls, I've got a great idea: 22 minus 2 is 20, which *IS* divisible by 5. Here, Jack, have two more. After all, we are all emancipated ladies," she added, meaning apparently something else. Charlotte looked at her, offended by the fact

that it wasn't herself, who has found the solution, but said nothing. Helga joined Mary: "...And because we have Canada Day today..." and Emily, who just came back, still tears in her eyes immediately saw the solution and added: "Come on, Jack, be a good sport!"

Jack was a little bit flabbergasted: at first he thought that the ladies apparently lost their mind, but then it occurred him, that it was some sort of a joke. He did as he was asked and quickly left with his whistle. And when Liz returned back from her telephone, they were all again in good mood. Even Helga, realizing she went too far, happily explained Liz what happened.

They were in the middle of celebrations, when suddenly the doorbell rang twice. Charlotte went to get the door and to her surprise she saw Bob, holding another box of *La vache qui rit*. "Here we go again, " she screamed, but was interrupted by Liz, who suddenly pushed her aside, seized Bob by hand and pulled him inside. "If Jack can have them, so can Bob!" she proclaimed triumphantly.

Poor Bob was standing there, understanding nothing. "It must be the box", he thought and took another look at it. And surely, there they were: 24 little cows, all laughing at him.

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SHORT STORY: THE OLD HUNDRED

When the cannonade was at its height, a Confederate band of music, between the cemetery and ourselves, began to play polkas and waltzes, which sounded very curious, accompanied by the hissing and bursting of the shells."

Lt. Col. Arthur J. L. Freemantle, British military diarist with general Lee at the time of the battle of Gettysburg.

Our band belonged to the 26th Regiment of North Carolina, but we still called ourselves Moravian Brass Band as we used to do back in Salem. Our forefathers actually came from Saxony. They settled first in Georgia, but later moved to North Carolina, where they founded the town they called Salem. But if you asked me what were we doing in Pennsylvania, I would have to say that we came here to teach those darn Yankees to sing

our Dixie.

We woke up to the morning of another day, the second day of the battle. The town was under our control, but in the surrounding hills you could see the bluish groups of enemy soldiers. They apparently did not want to give up so easy, since they were fighting on their own playground, so to say. And while their papa Lincoln was getting probably very nervous, we were ready to go and finish the job we had started yesterday.

Our boys were of course poking fun of the Union soldiers picking up their defences in places such as Devil's Den or Cemetery Ridge, but there was hardly anything to laugh at. Since more of their reinforcements arrived during past night, they clearly outnumbered us. It was clear that getting them down from those hills wouldn't be easy, not easy at all. We were getting up rather slowly, because we had a difficult day ahead and the thought that many of us wouldn't be able to wake-up tomorrow, that thought did not help us at all. Even the reveille, played by regimental bugler, sounded more like an odd fanfare from some other time and place.

As a musical band, we were actually rather special detachment and no one really wanted to be responsible for us. True, we used to play gallops for the cavalry, quicksteps for the infantry or patriotic marches during the parades, but we played mainly at funerals. Otherwise, we did serve the guarding duty like anybody else, sometimes helped the regimental surgeon and of course once a while we were assigned to the kitchen. And today was one of those days.

We all shared the aversion to our cook. Not because of food - he did the best he could - but you can hardly find the soldier who would like the kitchen duty. And while the others went on chopping the wood, our "king of gravy" called me aside and informed me that "somebody had stolen the sack of the sugar and why don't I go to the supply wagon and bring a new one." He then remembered the wagons were on the other side of Gettysburg, but he also said he knew there is one Texas brigade next to us and I "better go there and borrow it and tell them we'll return it later."

I didn't want to go - who would possibly believe such a promise - but he gave me an order and I had to go. Fortunately for me, their cook was a nice fellow, he said OK and "Amos here will go with you and help you". So we went and just to say something, I asked the tall Texan about his rather strange name. He replied that Amos was the name of their bishop Comenius, who lived two hundred years ago and that they are Moravian Brethern from Austin, Texas. "Really? We are also Moravians," I exclaimed, "our folks came to America with bishop Spangenberg!" "Oh yeah?", he said. "Well, our brothers and sisters came with reverend Chomsky. Some stayed in Austin, the others went further west., to the place called Temple."

"And how about the music? " I couldn't help asking, because Moravians were always known to be good musicians. "The music? " he laughed, "Why of course, we do have music band and it is the best in the whole America! I should know, I am the first trumpeter."

Well, I have heard that Texans are everything but modest, so I didn't want to argue. The important thing was that he was a fellow musician. You see, there is that invisible link among us : we get together, play for hours without saying a word and then, when parting, we shake hands and say: "Wasn't it a lovely evening?" I realized I had to show him to our boys; they would never forgive me if I didn't. Fortunately for us, Texan's cook had more understanding for those things and let him go; he wouldn't need him for an hour, he said.

So I introduced Amos to our bandleader, who wanted to know what music they could possibly play down there in Texas. "Well," the tall guy was suddenly shy, "it's mostly square dances or polkas . . . " But our boss just did not give up that easy. "Do you know Bonnie Blue Flag?" he asked. And my cowboy said "Excuse me! ", picked the old man's trumpet and from the way he was holding it you could see it was not for the first time. He looked it over, then puckered his face and pressed it to his lips like he would be kissing his girlfriend. And he played, oh God, how he played! Better than archangel Gabriel on the Last Judgement Day, if you ask me.

Our bandmaster was just sitting there, slightly nodding his head, but didn't give any sign that he liked it or not. When his turn came, he took his horn back from Amos and launched another one, our favorite "Maryland, oh Maryland!", but they've got in an argument, since the Texan claimed the melody was from German song "Oh Tannenbaum!". And then our boss challenged him again: "I bet you people down there don't know anything from our Zinzendorf! ". Of course, we were only little surprised when he lost, our old man that is, and then Amos played " The Old Hundred", which is the well known traditional psalm, brought here from our old country. He also added another song, popular with emmigrants, named "Shine, my golden sun" or something like that, anyway.

And when we all sat down, he did some explaining: "It runs in our family, you know. We are from Olmutz, and one of our relatives was "kapelmeister" Pawel Josef Wejvanowsky. He also started as a military trumpeter and became the famous composer." Amos obviously knew more about those things and since we wanted to know more, we kept him talking. He also told us how our kingdom was lost in single battle, the battle on White Mountain, where the mercenaries ran away and only the handfull of Moravian musketeers stayed and fought to the last man. Shortly afterwards, many true believers had to leave the country and sailed to the New World.

But then it was his time to go. Before he went, he took my music book and wrote down his address. "Come to my place after the war," he said, "all of you; you are most

welcome. My wife will prepare for you the real Moravian feast - you never ate anything like that in your life.

The battle was at its best when we spotted our chief commander accompanied by few of his officers, riding alongside our flank and heading to our left. So we picked our brass and played his favorite "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny's Shore" followed by "The 26th Regiment Quickstep". And then, suddenly and quite against his habit, our bandleader had a speech: "Boys, and now something for Amos - it must be pretty hot for them Texans under that Little Round Top! Let's hope he can hear us over there through all that noise."

And we played, first "Come Dearest, the Daylight is Gone", then "Tramp, tramp" and we even added "Juanita", which we figured must be known all over Texas. Somebody suggested "The Easter Gallop", the one we play in Salem on Eastern Sunday in the honour of Jesus Christ's resurrection. That is the time we all gather in the church, joined by all who can play any instrument, and you can hear our chorales down in the walley, far away . . .

Then Julius, without telling anyone, started "The Old Hundred", that ancient hymn which was most likely sung by those brave musketeers on that cursed White Mountain. Yes, when they realized that it was the end, the end of everything. And we all slowly joined him, one after another, and in that magic moment, that song was talking to us, too.

Some time later, maybe due to the fact the battle lasted too long so we run out of our repertoire, but mostly because we didn't want to play all the time only a sad music, we switched again to waltzes and polkas. And believe it or not, we had completely forgotten that all around us people were being killed, the horses were falling and the shells were flying above and across. Many of those shells even dropped right into the cemetery and exploded there among the graves, like it wouldn't be enough to die only once. Yes, we have forgotten that there was still that war going on, the worst of all wars, because there is actually nothing civil in the civil war . . .

Suddenly an officer arrived; he could have been an Englishman judging by his accent, and he stopped his horse right in the front of us. He answered our salute with a friendly smile: "Laddies, this is the first time I heard anybody play dance music in the middle of battle and next to the cemetery!" To which our Julius replied: "On this day, everybody tries to do what he knows best and what we know best is how to make the music, Sir."

From the dispatch to General Lee, 4th of July 1863:

"In the battle of Gettysburg, the 26th North Carolina Regiment suffered heavy losses: out of 800 men, only 83 were counted at the roll-call today."

THE END

Note by author:

The mentioned Freemantle's quotation about the 6th Regiment band can be found in many history books dealing with American Civil War. Recently - and by pure chance only - I discovered those musicians were Moravians from Salem. True to the historical fact, the Texas brigade was attacking the Little Round Top that day and lost there many brave soldiers. The Confederate soldier named Amos was added by me.

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INCLINATIONS: COMPUTER CREATED POETRY

FORGET-ME-NOT .

As we create our memories anew each day
Despondency and madness
Are like benign memories of childhood
I wonder if I have ever known you
All things considered

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Commentary:

Enough is enough. Since Christmas, we went through icy storms in Quebec and Ontario, we can expect eruption of famous volcano and that's not all. Some say it is caused by something called El Nino, the others suspect the shift of Jupiter's axis, some are blaming the greenhouse effect and pessimists are (again) expecting the end of world. That is the real *bummer*: now, when I am ready to enjoy my long awaited retirement, my well deserved pension! It could only happen to me - and where are they going to send my cheque? I am sure I will soon receive their letter asking me to check my future location as:

a) heaven, or

b) hell, or

c) in the case of another location: money can be sent to your account in the local bank, however the account number and the confirmation by branch manager is requested in advance...

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"Our son didn't take after his father. He hated our lifestyle and moved to



some place called Neanderthal..."

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OTHER DIMENSIONS: WHAT CAN ONE LEARN IN 37 YEARS.

(This article was first published in the Newsletter, Georgian Bay Chapter of PEO.)

I have put the question in singular, because I cannot speak for the others. Which may bring up another one: why exactly thirty seven years? Yes, you guessed it, that's how long I have been an engineer, if you count it in years, of course.

Well, they have asked me to write about "something", so I turned on my word-processor and started to use my thought-processor. First mistake: it should have been other way around, since I could not figure out what should be that precious "something". First thought popped up in my mind: I should be *able* to write about something, since I have learned a lot during all those years. Second thought was more pessimistic: Have I actually learned that much? And if so, how much? And there you have it, the subject of this article.

Many years ago, when I started, I was young, in good health and with little experience, but full of energy and ambitions. The world was mine, for a while anyway. Then finally I have started to learn and I haven't stopped since. Don't get me wrong: the more I have learned, more humility was sinking in my conscience and even sub-conscience. The more mistakes I made, the more I have learned and the more I have learned, the less mistakes I was supposed to make, hopefully.

I have learnt about *the power of the knowledge and the importance of the experience*. Because the knowledge without experience is like the car without wheels. On the other hand, the experience without knowledge is like the wheels without a car. So I have worked in design, production, quality control and even testing. I wrote few technical articles and millions of reports - well, one million too many, anyway. I even lectured at

the university; you know, that's howt they call the place where they still ask some nasty questions such as "*why?*". I have met many other engineers and let me tell you, they are really odd fellows; none of them can ever be employed as an used-car salesman: they prefer truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God. But this goes with our territory.

I have also performed duties of typist, accountant, draftsman, computer serviceman, planner and what not. It was not in my job description, but by the generally accepted definition, the engineer is the only guy "*smart enough to do it*" and "*willing enough to do it*". That also makes us special. Now there are many reasons, why one should want to be an engineer, but if you are looking for appreciation, let me tell you: you are entering the wrong business.

In spite of that, I have found tremendous satisfaction in my job. The feeling that you were involved - that you were there when they built it and that you are the creator of things which work and are also useful - those are the moments when I know that I have chosen my profession well.

I have also learned the value of *common sense*. That includes:

- 1) knowing *where* you are going,
- 2) finding the *best way* to get there, and
- 3) *sticking to it* all the time.

And of course you must enjoy what you are doing, too. Believe me, the satisfaction may be in getting there, but the real fun is in the travelling itself...

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LIFE: THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE

Russians, Russians everywhere. They called it brotherly help, but for the rest of the world it was just another invasion. Everybody felt sorry for us, but nobody helped, just like in Munich thirty years before and so after "Prague Spring" came tragic "Prague Fall".

On following days, there was nothing but a quiet, deafening stillness. The things were slowly moving from bad to worse and it made no sense to wait for them to happen. Fortunately, I had a friend Thomas, who would arrange for us to have a trip to England. Originally a tourist trip, it turned to be just "a one way ticket". All that remained was to slip the good-bye letter under the cabinet, the letter starting " Dear mom, . . . "

While touring England by bus, we saw many interesting places, such as Windsor Castle, Oxford University and at the end of course the City of London. We planned our disappearance just before the end of the tour; since we had no intentions to return back to Prague. We had to legalize our stay in England as soon as possible and so we visited the Home Office to get the Work Permit, which allowed us "*to work or carry on business*". You can appreciate the British sense of humour: between two of us, all we had was three pounds and two shillings; hardly enough to start any business at all.

Just before the departure for the airport, we jumped off the bus, hailed the nearby *cabbie* and drove away. Finally, we collected our suitcases from the safety box in the nearest subway and that was all. Who would guess it would be so easy?

Then we were on our own, free to go; but to go where? We did not know anybody in England or in the whole Commonwealth, for that matter. I spoke only a little English and Thomas knew just one sentence: "The cat is under the umbrella", which of course was not a door-opener, either.

They say that in crazy situations the best ideas are the crazy ones and I just happened to have one. Our family was listening for years to the famous BBC broadcasting program "London Calling". What could have been easier than to call them, for a change? So I did and believe it or not, they actually switched me directly to the manager of the BBC, Czech Section. I spoke in my broken English, but he understood our situation quite well. Thanks to him we received our first welcome and VIP treatment - but of course, in that time we hardly knew what VIP really meant.

They have found us a place to stay. The landlady was a widow of Czech pilot, who fought in the Battle of Britain. We had a very nice room and the rent was quite low: you cannot pay less than nothing! People at the BBC even helped us to find the job, somewhere north of London. Every morning we were driven to Steiner's factory in a company bus, filled mostly with lost souls like us. Somebody had a tape-recorder and it blasted then very popular song "Honey, honey, sugar, sugar", over and over again. Well, you can't get much sweeter than that!

Being short and sturdy, I was assigned to operate a Swiss made aluminum injection machine, which must have remembered the times of William Tell. There were no automatic controls and it needed split-second timing with two levers plus one large pushbutton. Having only two hands, I had to push the button with my knee and to repeat the prescribed sequence again and again, for eight hours a day and five days a week.

The evenings belonged to me and there were many ways how to spend them. You could ride doubledecker bus or use Subway. By the way, Londoners never call it that way, just *Underground* or *Tube*. Then, you might go to cinema or try some adventure in Soho. With the limited expense account, i.e. with all I had in my pocket, the best and only entertainment for me was the famous London Library. One could sit there for hours and read about - well, about anything he was not allowed to read before.

Next day, back at the factory, we had to cope again with noise, heat and very hard work. But we were free and believe me, it's rather difficult to describe such a feeling. Only those who ever escaped from somewhere or something, can really appreciate the newly gained freedom. We tasted it, smelled it, felt it by all senses, and of course, we kept falling in love with it, over and over again . . .

There were letters to write to our loved ones. We wanted to let them know we were all right, but the letters might have been intercepted by the state police and somebody might be compromised. There was only one solution: in our return address, we simply put the wrong name. First time we did it, it backfired: one could not possibly go to the post office and claim the parcel for George Bernard Shaw, could he? Well, I could and I did - and I've got it, too! When our friends finally did get the message, that is to disregard our new "names", our problems were not over yet. Once it happened that we received a box of rather cheap cigarettes but were asked to pay the duty all the same. As usual, we were short of money and so the parcel was confiscated in Her Majesty's name. Tom actually wanted me to tell them that Her Majesty would hardly touch that stuff, but I felt it would be rather improper and ungrateful.

In short time, I realized I could not stay at Steiner's any more. The melted aluminum does not stop at the surface but burns away into everything: shoes, shirt, even flesh. It usually happened at the end of the shift, when I had to empty the furnace into elongated, greased forms. Coming in contact with red hot metal, the grease was burning with little explosions. Glowing aluminum pellets were joyfully jumping off the form right on the wooden floor, dancing like fireflies and leaving black, smoking traces behind them. With the same joy, they were showering my best pants - my *only* pants - and burned ugly looking holes everywhere they touched. And one day, my hand might shake while I am pouring and the stream of metal would eventually find its way right into my shoes . . .

So I started to look for a better job and Thomas joined me in my search. One good soul sent us to the Employment Office. No work, no Sir! - we only got a friendly advice to go back and next time, before we leave our country, we better arrange for our job in advance. "But we cannot go back," I volunteered the information. "Not so loud," whispered the officer, "nobody needs to know you might be in some trouble,

gentlemen!"

The other day we went to British Museum, which is the only Encyclopedia Britannica you can actually walk through. And we could see it all: treasures from the pyramids, Champollion's Rosetta Stone and even the famous crystal scull carved from quartz, the work of many generations of artisans. Next trip was to the Science Museum, to see Stevenson's locomotive, The Rocket, and there - look - the steam engine of James Watt! The very same one we learned about at high school.

The plans - did we have any? Dreams, yes, but not yet the real plans. Europe was overcrowded, that we knew for sure and so we wanted to go elsewhere. Thomas was obsessed with an idea of going to Australia. "You can learn English aboard of ship," he told me with some excitement. Well, it would be surely the *moving* experience, but I needed some time to think about it. The world seemed to be suddenly very small, very round and quite slippery. How about New Zealand or South Africa? Or - come to think of it - how about Canada?

But of course, Canada! I remembered: the great Northwest Passage. Yes, mathematician and astrologer doctor John Dee and his companion Edward Kelly! During their travels across Europe, they made their stop also in Bohemia. Emperor Rudolf himself, the Second if you count them, commissioned Kelly to use his black art and convert lead into gold for his imperial mint. The same Rudolf, who later gave orders for Kelly's arrest. The murder, they said, or rather the duel over a lady, who happened to be married - *until* that duel, anyway. The good doctor Dee, on the other hand, was not too much fooling around, he had another obsession: the scientific proof for existence of the Northwest Passage, the waterway across North America. And on his advice, they all later went to look for it: Sir Walter Raleigh, captain Hudson and many others after them, all in vain. When the passage was finally found, there was no use for it any more - there were already trains there.

Talking to Englishmen, I noticed that they had generally two objections against Canada: "*it's bloody cold there*" and "*the people in Canada are so crazy*" (of course, they said "*weird*"). Well, nothing could be cooler than cold war and I knew that one already. And crazy, you say? How much crazy they could be? One day we visited our friend in Colchester who worked in local hospital for mentally disturbed. They sat quietly by the fireplace, reading the Times and some even played *football* (our soccer) against their doctors. Interestingly enough, the doctors lost the game that day, and boy - were they raving mad! I just hoped that those Canadians wouldn't look like them. . .

It was nice to stay at widow's place but to prevent any rumours, we moved into an

apartment - pardon me, *flat*, in Nort-East London. There I met somebody who got me a job at Lyons. The chap who was hiring me claimed I was overqualified, but soon he found I didn't have any experience at all, in window-cleaning that is. My supervisor was an old Scott and former sailor, who couldn't stand it when my bucket was overflowing with suds. I believe now that he took it rather personally, almost as an insult. Reluctantly, he let me in on the secret of how to do it right. Don't expect me to tell it to you however, he made me swear I wouldn't and so I won't.

The ladder, white walls and the bucket full of hot soapy water became my new world. Lyons, the food giant, was like a *City within another City* and there was everything there: superbakeries, meat processing lines, good food, bad food and even hot showers. Above all, it was also the best place to hide during winter season.

But there were also the other moments to remember. The tall ladder, which was supposed to be held by my co-worker (but we seldom followed the procedures) once started to slip from under me. Or rather with me. Not a good feeling, especially if you are thirty feet above ground. Fortunately, the ladder finally hit some obstacle and stopped sliding. The other time it slipped sideways however, and since there was nothing to stop it, I was left hanging from a steam pipe, screaming for help. We never used gloves, so I developed a pair of oversized blisters, which healed rather slowly, being continuously soaked in the detergent. Thomas had probably worse deal than I did; he stayed with the old job and I could see his fingers, full of cuts and bandages all the time. Still, we were both lucky we made it on our own, with a little need of help from anybody.

One thing impressed me most: the company had an extensive quality program. Rumour had it that British Quality Standards were developed during German *Blitzkrieg*. Knowing enough by then, I had no doubts they considered the quality more important than *Krauts*. Each building at Lyons was devoted to one kind of cake. Infinite cake was running up four floors, waiting to be sliced, covered by whipped cream, then rained over by strawberries, finally meeting its other half. It was then cantilevered to the top floor, wrapped-in and then enjoyed the toboggan ride five floors down, right into the waiting truck. In another building, another cake was assembled in six layers, glued together with fudge, covered by chocolate and then had its edges smoothed by the girls dressed like nurses. I couldn't imagine paradise looking any better.

When I told Thomas that I had finally decided to go to Canada, he quickly changed his mind and wanted to go there with me. Saving money is my second nature and after few months I had enough for one airplane ticket. Thomas wasn't that successful, but luckily, I also received an answer to my letter I had sent before to Westinghouse company in Canada. Their Hamilton office in Ontario was asking me to see them "at my earliest convenience". Meaning very little, it nevertheless helped me to get a loan from Canadian

Government, and I could turn my savings to Thomas. Then there was the last problem: Thomas was leaving a week after me and not knowing the language, he could board a wrong plane. So I made him a promise to give him complete instructions, all the way through immigration, customs and eventually to the proper gate.

And so on that final day, if you happened to be at the airport, you could see one strangely looking fellow in shabby pants decorated with multitude of burned holes. He was looking curiously around and once in a while scribbled something on the oversized postcard. Just before boarding the plane, he (or rather I, if you haven't guessed it already) asked one of the flight attendants to mail that mysterious postcard. The man couldn't help noticing that it was addressed to somebody in London. Puzzled, he looked up and gave me a smile. "Where are you heading, Sir?" he asked and I replied: "The Northwest Passage, of course!"

It was just a joke, but by that time I should have really known better: one can hardly shock an Englishman. He smiled back and said in all seriousness: "Oh, you mean Canada? Good luck to you then - you may very well need it, Sir!"

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SHORT STORY: THE LAST ESCAPE

Of course I had to join them. At first, I could not figure out what they were waiting for, but at least I was sure they all gathered there expecting something or somebody to appear. One thing was sure: they weren't the kind of ordinary tourists, who are only trying to get the best view of the Falls. Most of them didn't even watched the waterfall, so deeply involved in some kind of discussion. They looked to me more like a group of conspirators. Then I remembered: it was all over the newspapers and was talked at length on local television. . .

Yes, they were waiting for him, for Great Houdini, or rather for his ghost, who was supposed to materialize today. It was Halloween and god knows who came with the idea that he would show up and even right there on that particular rock. And while I am not vulnerable to the psychology of masses - I believe that IQ of the crowd is equal to the lowest IQ in the crowd - the curiosity alone drove me right to them. Maybe it had something to do with the fact that I am always fascinated by people who believe in improbable things.

People gathered there on top of the rock, the one on the American side of the Falls. They were standing in small groups and arguing with a high degree of anxiety. The passers-by were coming and going: some of them shook their heads, while the others were just smiling. None of them was of course taking it too seriously, being ready to dismiss the whole thing as a nonsense. Only the believers were staying - and surprisingly - so was I and for some strange reason I just couldn't make myself to leave.

Then right next to me, somebody uttered in apparent condemnation : "Those fools, those bloody fools!" Since I was not sure if it was meant for me, I turned to the man who had spoken the words. He was probably very old, since his white hair was falling in long streams on his shoulders and his short, crew-cut beard was of the same color. Well, I have met in my life many men who looked like Buffalo Bill, mostly in one show or another, so at first I thought he is just some kind of actor.

But something out of order caught my eye: while his mouth was still twisted in ironic grin and his voice had shown his apparent disgust, his small, very blue eyes couldn't hide something else. Yes, I couldn't help thinking that this man was actually admiring those "fools", and as I had to admit, so was I. I took another look at him when he didn't watch me, scanned his long coat and baggy pants - altogether a appearance of the common bum. Not a fellow you want to start conversation with, at least not without keeping your hand safely on your valet. But my curiosity was raised already.

"So you don't believe he will show today?" I asked him in obvious mockery, but he answered very seriously: "Of course he won't, why should he?"

I immediately noticed he didn't say "how could he", as one would expect in such situation and so I asked: " `Why should he´, you said? You are talking like you know his habits very well."

"Maybe I do, maybe I don't," he said quietly and clammed-up. And then we were just standing there and I was about to leave, when he suddenly collapsed. Just like that, without a word, without even a sigh. People helped me to get him to the nearest park bench but he refused our assistance: "It's nothing, really!" But I didn't want to leave him there just like that - I can smell good story miles away and by God there was definitely one right there. Of course I couldn't tell if it wasn't just a good performance on his part, but something told me that inside those worn rags is a gentleman, somebody who remembered much better times.

"Are you ill? I asked, but he shook his head. Then it struck me: "I bet you haven't eaten too much for some time. Why don't we go somewhere and I buy you a dinner..."

"Oh no, I ate alright," he resisted, with faked sincerity, but again, his eyes convinced me he was lying. I insisted and so we went. I took him in my car and drove him to the one place I knew very well, named Vincenzo's, after its owner, of course. Needless to say it was Italian restaurant and while the food was good, the prices were reasonable. I sort of liked the spot and I thought it would be perfect to open the mouth of my companion.

I did not pry to make him talk. Instead, I was watching his hands; they usually tell you a lot about the person they belong to. He had long, thin fingers with trimmed nails and his hands were slightly shaking - but not too much, considering his apparent age. The ways he handled fork and knife were refined, actually too refined for the place we were. Again, it crossed my mind that the old fellow must have witnessed the better times, certainly until he hit the retirement or shall we say, until it hit him. Maybe he was just living off his stingy relatives and sometimes had to con somebody to pay him a supper.

When we finished the beer, his hands were already steady. And then he finally opened his mouth - until then too busy - and said: "Italian food! Oh how I love it! You, Sir, are a real gentleman! "

"Now, now," I resisted, since I wasn't sure he is not making a fool of me, "let us say you will explain to me what you said before and we'll be even."

"What was it I said before? Oh, you mean that I talked like I knew him? Actually, I never met the chap."

It was obvious, that he didn't want to tell me his story just for dinner only, so I tried to play it safe: "Suppose you tell me whole story and if I find it worthwhile, I will pay you extra."

"He gave me rather deplorable smile: "I do not think you have enough money to pay me - that is if you want to publish the story. No, Sir, it is not for sale."

"All right then, how about if I promise you I will not make it public. What then? "

"No need to promise anything, Sir, I trust you. But still, the answer is no!"

That irritated me: "But of course, there is no story, I knew it all along!"

"Oh no, I didn't say there is no story," he insisted.

"Why, you just admitted you didn't even know Harry Houdini!"

"Erich was his name, he just called himself Harry, and Weiss not Houdini. Like everything, nothing with that chap was just what it appeared to be. And so there is the story and then again it may not be..."

That was as much as I could stand: "You keep talking in puzzles, Mister..., Mister..., or is your name also secret?"

"Benoit," he said quickly, " Claud Benoit."

I picked my hat and started to leave."So, Mr. Benoit, what's the deal?"

Suddenly he stopped pretending: "You must excuse me, Sir, I do apologize for my behavior, it really wasn't nice of me. You take me here, treat me like a king and I wouldn't even answer your questions. I must have had looked rather ungrateful to you!"

I didn't go for it: "How much?"

He smiled again:" Nothing, for you - nothing."

" Come on, here you are, playing the games again. Are you telling me you don't want anything in return? Where is the catch?"

"OK,"he said, " I'd tell you the story if you promise you won't tell it to anybody. The dinner was excellent and you surely didn't offer it to me just because you wanted to hear my story." He certainly knew how to make me feel ashamed, then noticed that and quickly added: " Then again, if you pay me another beer..."

" As many as you wish, " I agreed, put down my hat and sat down at the table, " I hope it's worth it ".

"You won't be sorry, Sir, that I promise you, " he assured me, but rather in vain, since I was sorry already. But it was too late, he got me where he wanted. . .

"Back to your question then: No, I never met Harry, at least not personally, no Sir. And yes, I can tell positively what he would or wouldn't do in. Why? I studied Houdini for so many years I can even tell you what he would be telling you right now, word by word. He fascinated me, you know. Not as a magician or showman, but as an innovator. Nothing seemed to be impossible to him. He ventured where no man dared before. He achieved amazing feats and gave incredible performances. But deep down - and I am sure of it - the man was hoping that one day he will do something utterly impossible, even for him. Completely impossible, if you know what I mean." Old man was obviously

caught in the web of his own tale and anxiously carried on.

"How can I be so sure? Well, Harry meticulously wrote down everything in his diaries and I mean those few which were not published yet. Every single trick is described there and you can see the man was a real genius."

"But the way he died," I tried to object, "I mean that stupid injury caused by one student in Montreal...?"

"Oh, you do know about that, too? And you think Houdini bungled that one, do you?" And when I nodded, he asked me: "Did it ever occur to you that was actually scheduled?"

"Planned, you mean?" I asked in disbelief. "Surely you don't want to tell me he planned his own death?"

"Why not? He planned it many times before and don't forget, he was the best escapist who ever lived. He could escape from anything, tied in chains, jailed, submerged or even buried!"

Yes, but then he was very much alive!" I objected.

"You said it, Sir, the illusion wasn't complete, something was still missing - people knew he was alive. But what if he died and was considered dead by everybody? Wouldn't it be rather ultimate achievement - or shall we say a miracle? After all, nobody did it before him. Except for one but he was the son of God, after all. Yes, Houdini aimed much higher. I can't tell you he really believed it possible, for a man I mean, all I know he just wanted to do it, the supreme stunt of them all, his *last escape*! I happened to stumble on some documents - letters to his friend - which made me believe he was determined to do it!"

I was skeptical: "But nobody else knew about it?"

"They were not supposed to, Sir. You would have to know Harry, he never talked openly about his next projects. He was superstitious, you know."

I had to laugh: "Houdini- superstitious?"

"Believe me, he was. And there was of course the competition. He wanted to be the first, well, let's say *the first of men*, anyway."

"And nobody knew," I voiced my doubt, "except that friend of his - and I presume he is dead now, too?"

"Except him and me, of course. I just do not have enough facts to prove it."

That surprised me: " And what about those documents you mentioned before? "

"I had to burn them; I promised that to my friend. You see, he asked me in his letter to burn them."

I pretended to be furious: " Man, you destroyed the only proof about Houdini best achievement - how could you? "

He missed my irony: "Yes, I know, it was hounding me ever since. That's another reason I do not want it to become public knowledge. Now, without proof, they will only ridicule me."

"And how about the right of public, the right to know "

" Oh yes, you people from newspaper , you claim it all the time, to justify almost anything. There is no right to know here, you know. Harry didn't want anybody to know, period."

"But still, he could have told some other person you do not know about. If he really succeeded, that is, which I sincerely doubt, anyway." I added.

"Well, he did succeed. You see, I know he did have a plan. First step: he had to be injured, so that his death would look natural. The Montreal injury fulfilled this first task."

" You mean he actually asked the student to injure him so he can fake his death? " I asked in disbelief.

"Of course not, it had to look natural, he couldn't tell the soul."

"Than he actually was not injured at all? "

"Oh no, Sir, he was, but not seriously, you know. Second point: the injury and its consequences had to be become the public knowledge, that's why he did not finish his last performance. By the way, it was not in the Chinese water torture chamber, as it was shown in that movie."

" Oh yes," I nodded," I saw the movie, it was quite convincing."

"And so was Houdini, when he wanted - and he always wanted. Now to the point three: he had to be proclaimed clinically dead, that was the most important but also the most difficult step of the whole scheme."

"Yes, it surely was," I agreed, " but how did he manage that? "

"I do not know, maybe some drug, which extremely slows down the heartbeat or ..."

"...or he bribed the doctor!" I interrupted.

"Oh no, not Harry, he could not risk that," old man disagreed.

" And the step number four? " I could not hold my anxiety.

"The resurrection, of course!"

" Or maybe he woke up in his coffin, could not get out and died horrible death!"

"You think doctors will let him suffocate to death? No Sir, you see, that's why he couldn't not take any doctor in his confidence."

"But don't you agree, he could die and the doctor would keep quiet. It's illegal to proclaimed somebody dead if he is not and that fact alone would shut the mouth of any doctor who was implicated. It is quite possible that he is dead after all, " I concluded.

"Possible, but hardly probable. Don't forget, Houdini was always ready for all alternatives, he studied all potential problems. For instance, he always carried in his belt a small knife to cut the ropes if everything fails. And there was no customary check of the coffin since he was presumed to be dead anyway."

"So when the worst came to worst, they could dig him out when the time run out, which they would, if it is as you said, " I carried on my objections.

"No, he did not have any accomplices," said the old man with strange conviction. ""he was quite ingenious, he did not need them. And I am telling you, he did escape."

"How do you know? You are just guessing, right?"

" No, I *do* know. It was in the dead man's correspondence: I saw the proof Harry visited him after his burial."

"Oh yes, " I exclaimed," I remember he promised publically that if there is an afterlife, he would come back to tell us all about it. He would simply had to admit that he was wrong, that there is such a thing as the life after death."

My storyteller suddenly became very angry: "Nothing of that sort, Sir, when I said he escaped from the grave alive, I meant what I said.

" OK, but why nobody us haven't learned about his escape - not even his wife? And what happened then? Where did he live, what did he do? Why didn't he tell even afterwards? Such a feat would bring him the immortal glory! That does not sound like Harry Houdini at all!"

"It does not, does it? " he had to admit. "No, I do not know why he didn't and a no, I do not know the rest of the story. But imagine this: when he got out of the family tomb - you know, the one which was decorated with his bust he ordered and let himself to be photographed with - when he got out, he was most likely overcome with joy. He finally did it : the best escape of them all and there was nothing which could beat it. His first thought of course was to go home, report it to police and have an interview with the newspapers."

"Then, suddenly, he realized they may not believe him. Old Harry was dead, with all official documents to prove it. They may even consider him to be an impostor, and pretty bad one, for that matter. Yes, old Harry was definitely dead, but there was also another one born again. Free to go somewhere, anywhere. Free from all the ties with this world. He had enough money stashed away, he could get new name a start again. No more perpetual race to surpass himself, that everlasting drive to become better and better, which was getting more difficult, since he already tried everything and was getting old. Now, he could go away, far from the maddening crowd, which was mercilessly asking for more dangerous stunts."

"It was tempting and what's more it was possible!"

I had to interrupt him again:" But I thought he had everything - the glory, the admiration, and of course the money. What more one can possibly ask? Why would he throw it all away?"

My old man did not budge: "Yes, it's hard to understand. But he was also human. We all have, at least once in the lifetime, the urge to leave everything and run away. But most of us cannot - he could and he did. All that was needed was to get up and just keep going. Nobody would ever try to look for him. It was the best escape of them all - his *last escape*, you might say."

I was amazed, I had to admit. still, there was some doubt. " How about his wife, the one he loved so much? "

"She had enough money and she was better off the way it was. Besides, he promised to give her sign after he is dead, but he wasn't dead yet."

"And how about those "fools" as you called them? How could he possibly betray them, desert them? "

He laughed: "He haven't deserted them, he is still in their hearts. Always the illusionist, he tricked them all. And he tricked the death, too. It was nothing but a lie and even I cannot tell the truth about him."

Then it dawned on me:" But surely there was one person he owned the explanation, the student who was blamed for his death, what was his name, Claud..."

He interrupted: "Never mind his name, Sir. Yes, you may say that the boy was probably torturing himself for quite some time, but..."

I pressed furtherd: "Come on, there was no friend and no letters, Mr. Benoit. You are that student and you just invented the whole story to put your conscience at ease.

He didn't deny who he was, but somehow insisted on his story. "You do not need to believe me, Sir, but he *did* visit me. It was two years after his death, after his official death. He realized he left me with quite a blame. He came and smartly asked me for my forgiveness, before he told me the whole story. I was then happy like a child - imagine, I didn't kill Houdini after all! He gave me my life again and in return, I promised him that I would never reveal his secret to anybody. "

"But you have told it to me ", I chuckled, "what if I *do* make your story public? "

He replied with a smile: "I do not think you will, Sir, you promised not to. But go ahead, do it, nobody will believe you anyway!"

When we left the resturant, I still had one question I wanted to ask him : " Was he ever tempted to go back, to his former life - to his glory, admiration and big money? "

"He never told me, but he surely was, many times, I guess. At least I hope he did.

Because that's the price one has to pay for his freedom, Sir. Don't you agree? " he asked
and then he disappeared into the night.

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INCLINATIONS: BOULEVARD DES SOURCES

To make ends meet
to die, to sleep
last rites, oak coffin
promise to keep
and blessed, blessed are the meek
So dreadful...

Short intermission
endless night
one cheating heart
one hopeless fight
last breath of broken violin
So dreadful...

Custer's last stand
then tearless weep
hello, goodbye
and life is cheap
last sexless climax, body twitch
So dreadful...

...and wonderful

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HURONTARIA - 3A/98



Canadian Czech-out Enzine • Kanadsko-ěeský oběasník.

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Commentary:

Good news, bad news, plenty of news. Lately, I noticed that facts were just happening to me and all I had to do was to sort them out. My blessed age, which is actually quite far from blessed since it is more sinful than sinister, is not at fault here. Quoting Murphy (No good deed will remain without punishment), it is clear that we will eventually get it at the end, irregardless of what we did. My idle talk aside, you probably want to know why did we shorten the name of our enzine - yes, we didn't change it, we just dropped one letter. Well, I could claim it was for economical reasons, but why not tell the truth - once a while, anyway? Yes, behind all this is the "other" world and Mary Browning. You can read all about it right on this page, in the section conveniently called "Life". . .

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"I think, therefore I am. Idiots don't think, therefore they don't exist... "

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OTHER DIMENSIONS: FIFTY YEARS OF CZECH OSCAR

(originally published in Czech, Neviditelný pes, February 1998)

Last week, I have seen an U.S. movie on television. True, it wouldn't be anything special, since most of the TV movies here are American movies. Neither it was anything unusual about the fact that the movie was made in the year 1948. If I tell you, that it was called *The Search* and the leading role was played by Montgomery Clift, it wouldn't probably excite you too much, either.

Now how about if I mention that the little kid in the movie was played by Czech boy Ivan Jandl and that he was awarded for his performance with Golden Oscar, the first Czech Oscar ever? I believe there are very few people, who know about it, in spite of the fact that I have found the references about it at least on four WEB pages. I mean the U.S. WEB, not Czech WEB; there was nothing there. Even so, only one page mentioned him further, namely: "Sorry! We have no biographical information on Ivan Jandl."

True, when Czech Movie *The Shop on the Main Street* got Oscar in 1965, there was a short note about the first Oscar (and Ivan) in one Czech newspaper. So last year, when another Czech film "Kolia" got another Oscar, I simply assumed, that somebody would mention Ivan again. No such luck. Maybe somebody did, but my browsers didn't find it. That's a real pity: it would be interesting to compare those movies, since both deal with the little boy, who lost his family.

I have known Ivan personally - we grew up together at the outskirts of Prague, called Liben, and went to same school. He was rather fragile, short, had blond hair and he liked to play chess. And he played it well. He was the member of Disman's Radio Children Assembly and also acted in several radio plays. It was there, where director Fred Zinnemann found him for his movie. Ivan told me about it: they made the movie in postwar Germany and Switzerland. He remembered how much was he, the boy growing up in hungry war years, impressed by the fact they had always enough food for him and other actors.

The film alone is a story of a Czech boy, Karl Malik, who was separated from his family by Germans, during the war. An American soldier Ralph Stevenson (Montgomery Clift) is helping to unite Karl with his family again. It was a simple story, but not banal at all, thanks to superb performance of both actors.

Montgomery Clift received Oscar for the leading role and Fred Zinnemann for direction. Even Ivan didn't end empty handed, I quote:

Honorary and Other Awards: *To IVAN JANDL, for the outstanding juvenile performance of 1948, as "Karel Malik" in The Search [miniature statuette].*

I remember Ivan once mentioned something about some strange men dropping an acid on the head of his Oscar, just to establish if it is a real gold. That was because the communists just ceased the power and while the misery of Karl Malik had ended, the suffering of Ivan Jandl just started. The story in the movie "The Search" surely shouldn't give communists any reason for censoring, but the

film was prohibited for forty years all the same. That's why I first saw it only later, in Canada.

Ivan's only "crime" was that he acted in the American movie. Subsequently, he had to leave university, was assigned to work in a quarry and the years of persecution deprived him of the possibility to develop his talent. Then, in 1986, I have heard he was working for Czech Radio again, but later, I have lost any contact. If you know him and happen to see him, please give him my regards and congratulations to the fiftieth anniversary of his Oscar.

Note: *I have received many letters answering this article, one even from Brasil. It was from those letters that I learned that Ivan died in 1987, in complete obscurity.*

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LIFE: WHY DID WE LOSE OUR LETTER "N"? (The Mysterious Mary Browning.)

No, I didn't talk to her and we didn't exchange any letters. How could we - Mary Browning is already dead. And yet, if it wouldn't be for her, our HURONTARIAN could probably still keep its letter "N" . . .

Let me start from the very beginning: as you probably noticed, I am a rather curious person. And it was my pride that forced me to browse the NET in order to see if our engine became already visible. The individual finds started to pup-up on the screen, line after line. First, the links from our good friends: Neviditelný Pes, Amberzine, Kanadské Listy and even Hurontel, our conserver - pardon me, our server. That was nice - but then suddenly:

...Brown Family Genealogical Society...

I clicked on *Find* to see what do they say about us and there it was: Mary Browning, year 1995 and, you guessed it, "*Hurontarian*". That was rather strange: how could Mary Browning know in 1995 how I am to call this engine, when I still didn't know it in last December? I do not mind if somebody, who is still "browning", is included between "browns" already, but *Hurontarian* is supposed to be ours, only ours. Unless the date indicates the year she died and the record then could be a message from the other world. But why send it by Internet? Luckily, the record also mentioned the name of a small town in Ontario. I soon wrote two letters there, to different webmasters. The answers arrived soon and both were negative. Only one of them suggested that *Hurontarian* may indicate somebody, who is from *Hurontario*...

Let me take a detour here and explain, how I myself invented the title *Hurontarian*. Now, also on this page, there is a short story I wrote few years ago, called *Mr. Hurontario*. You may learn there that according to it's hero, Filip Martinec, Hurontario is just a dreamplace, the never-never land to which he used to escape, when he was homesick. He even called himself "The First Citizen of Hurontario". Who would dare to claim that Mary Browning already knew that?

I have sent another e-mail directly to Brown Family Society - you know, those are the Brown people who are not satisfied that their name is borne by millions of others and they also want to know their accurate count. Their answer helped me to unwind the mystery, to solve the riddle. They gave me an address of their correspondent in Ontario, who explained to me that he found the record in the Obituary, in the insert of a small town newspaper. And the name of that insert was - yes, you guessed it, *Hurontarian*. I felt like being stabbed right in my heart, or rather in my back. Could it be we were only second with that idea? The further research proved that indeed the area between Ontario and Huron Lakes used to be called Hurontario. Therefore the people who lived there were called Hurontarians. . .

What do you say? O.K., O.K., no need to twist the knife in the wound, it hurts enough already. Now what? To change our name? All right, but how? *Hurontarians* - that would remind us all the time the pain we suffered. *Hurontario* - well, there is already one street of that name in Mississauga, one store with musical instruments and at least one Internet provider. *New Hurontarian* - what a patch! And how about HURONTARIA? Why not - there is Anglia, Australia, Austria; they all end with an 'A'. Yes, let's call it Hurontaria, the fictional land of Filip Martinec. The place you can escape when your boss is terrorizing you, your neighbour is bugging you or your wife does not stop nagging. If Terry Pratchett (an English writer) can have his Discworld, why not us? True, ours can be confused with some other things, but even Bohemia was named by original Keltish inhabitants (Boimis), who are not living there any more, at least for the last thousand years.

Now how about those readers, who would miss that missing "N" too much? Easy: they can always scribble it at the end, either on the paper or right on the screen. Actually, that letter is the only thing we are dropping from our engine: the address and content I stay same as before.

Those, who still don't like our change, will have to go back to their daily press and it's daily horrors. And those who may object that we actually pushed Hurontarian through some kind of a sex change, we have only one answer: "Forget your prejudices and get some life!" Now, we also want to coin new promotional slogan: *HURONTARIA, the magazine with true difference*. It may sound little bit snobbish, but isn't it true, after all?

I remember one story I have read somewhere, from the times of the last Canadian gold rush. It happened - you guessed it - right here, in Ontario. Charlie Wilson, the owner of a small flotilla of boats which were delivering the goods for gold diggers, decided to christen them (I mean the boats). Unfortunately, he was told that one of them which he named *VULCAN*, cannot be registered since that name was already picked for other boat somewhere else. The real trouble was that Charlie, true Scotsman, already bought the gold-plated letters for all his boats, probably because they were on sale. With inventiveness of his countrymen, Charlie just reshuffled the letters and came up with brand new name: *CANVUL*. Now, if you compare us with Charlie, you have to admit we still have a lot to catch-up. . .

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SHORT STORY: Mr. HURONTARIO

Sure, I knew him - but can we really claim that we *know* somebody? They say it's only possible when you see him in special situations which require supreme sacrifice, for instance the sacrifice of own's life. However, who would dare to judge somebody by his actions in the situation, which happens once in a lifetime and he wasn't even ready for it?

Well, yes, we work for the same company, but in different departments. We came here, to Northern Carolina, several times, as it is required by the project we are both working on. But why do you talk about him in the past tense, inspector? O.K., you are not from police, you are from FBI. Did he do anything wrong? Oh, he is missing! Well, last time I have seen him was on the plane - we live in separate hotels, you know? Yes, I think he is Canadian citizen, but what has that got to do with it? Oh, you think that somebody from locals could - ? No, he didn't make any friends here, as far as I know. We weren't really friends either - you have to understand: we come here once a month and then back again to Canada. Our company is in Burlington. Who did he make friends with? I really wouldn't know; but if he is so busy as I am, he could only be in contact with some technicians, the supervisor of Test Department and the secretary of Mr. Dillon. And with Mr. Dillon, of course, but only if he invites by him for a dinner in the *Kiwanis Club*.

No, I am responsible for the electronic part of our project while he is a mechanical engineer. But of course, we both have to be members of Engineering Association, it is our company requirement. Double citizenship? Yes, he could have one, not like me. I am Swiss, you know, we can have one citizenship only. That's why I have to pay them every year few hundred bucks, so I needn't go back there for military exercise. But of course, I understand, you have to check everything. You have to suspect everybody. And then, by elimination process - all right, no conclusions, I know you didn't invite me here for that. Sure, I will tell you all I know, but it's not that much, after all

- - -

His name is Martinec, Filip Martinec. No - not Martínez - he was not Mexican neither Cuban, he was Czech. Yes, of Czech nationality, from Europe, you know, behind that big swimming-pool... Sorry, I know you guys don't like jokes. No, he didn't try to hide it, everybody in our company new that. He was proud of it; aren't you proud of your homeland? You are from Texas? Now, you see, Texans are supposed to be proudest of them all. We all called him *Mister Hurontario*; he used to say that he is "the native of Hurontario". Yes, it could mean that he was born there or that he is just living there. No, Hurontario is not a Province. No, not even town. As far as I know, that's how they call one street in Mississauga. Yes, Mississauga is the town, near Toronto.

You don't understand why he talked about it? Well, one of his friends was living in Hurontario Street and Filip also stayed there for some time. They knew each other from Prague. Yes, Prague, the capital of Bohemia. You said you knew it? Why do you ask then? He told me the whole story about it. Oh, you want to hear it? Well, it was like this: after the Russian invasion, he lived for some time in some Italian camp for refugees and then he immigrated to Canada. When he arrived, first he went to Hamilton, to look for work. No, he didn't find it, so he decided to see that friend of his and surprise him. He didn't know about it yet. Who? His friend, of course. Didn't know what? Well, about the fact that Filip is already in Canada. They didn't write too much to each other - last thing he

send him was a postcard from Italy.

However, Hurontario is a very long street, from Ontario Lake up North. No, not all the way up to Huron Lake, that would be two hundred miles long street. It was raining that day and he walked - could you imagine? - all the way to the place where his friend lived. It was late at night and when he waked him, his friend was so surprised that he could only ask: "How in heaven did you get here?" Filip made very tired face and said: "I swam all the way from Italy!" When he was telling me about it, Filip laughed and claimed his friend actually believed it!

Yes, I know this is not too much of a story, but it was you who wanted to hear it. And I obeyed, because I would like to cooperate, yes Sir. Now, tell me, is this really the case for the FBI? I get it: you cannot leave it to the local sheriff, because he is a Canadian, can you? You didn't want to hear the story but only the truth? I don't know the truth, Sir, I can only tell you what I was told, either by others or by himself. It is up to you to find out the facts and separate them from the rest.

- - -

He came from Italy, but he didn't tell me the name of the camp he was in. All I know is that he got married there. She wasn't Italian; she was Czech, his highschool sweetheart. As a tourist in Italy when Russians invaded her country, she decided not to go back. instead, she wrote him to come and join her in Italy. And he went, on foot - would you believe it? I don't know why, he probably enjoyed walking, that's all. Across Austria he went, right over the Alps. How did he managed? Those were Austrian Alps, Sir, not ours in Switzerland. He was also guided by love, I suppose.

When he arrived, they've got married. Helena - that was her name - was really happy. It felt like a miracle, to be together again. A then, there came the wedding italian style. Have you ever had one? No, neither had I, but I was once on Italian wedding in Scarborough and let me tell, they are obsessed with it! No, they had nothing altogether, she had a small suitcase and he carried a knapsack. No money either, it was all paid by local people. Filip remembered, even after all those years, how happy she was - she glowed with joy. He even showed me their wedding photograph.

Oh, you did see the photograph? You were in the hotel, in his room? He disappeared and his things are still there? That's strange! So you really don't know where he could possibly be. Haven't occur to you that he may have left for a trip and he'll come back again? Yes, I know, ten days ir rather long for a trip, especially when he didn't tell anybody. He was kidnapped, maybe ? No, our company does not have any secrets; besides, they should rather kidnap me, in that case. He could have his own secrets, you say? Sure, we all have them. Yes, from our past; that's what I meant.

Listen, I just remembered something, about that nickname of his. He talked about it a lot. Funny way, like it wouldn't be any real place, more like a dreamland or never-never land. He even got his card printed:

Filip Martinec
THE FIRST CITIZEN OF HURONTARIO

Yes, it could mean some honorable title or just that he was the very first inhabitant. No, there was no hoax in it, it was more like an innocent fun. You have to understand: he traveled a lot, mostly for our

company. He didn't particularly like Burlington where he lived, but he needed a place of his own. He could not go back home, to his country; he would be immediately arrested. No, he was not a criminal, he crossed the border legally, with his passport. His "crime" was that he didn't return back, to the country occupied by Russians. Yes, you remember now, of course it was punishable - like if you leave a prison and don't return back . . .

- - -

Filip and Helena had trouble from the very beginning, even in Mississauga, where they lived close to his friend. No, he does not live there any more, he moved to British Columbia. What kind of troubles? he didn't tell me, but it was mostly marital problems. *Helenska* wasn't happy, you know. And she had good reasons, I presume. Maybe her idea about marriage was different; after all, he was her first husband. He was away most of the time and she had to stay home alone. It just didn't work, that's all. No, she didn't fool around - at least he didn't know about it; I would have noticed it then. No, of course she didn't answer your phone call - she doesn't live there any more!

You don't know they are divorced? Well, one day Helena took off. No, with nobody, just on her own; she had enough. He missed her ever since and never completely recovered. Yes, she's got married again and lives in Alberta. She now has two beautiful children and is apparently happy again. No, I have never met her, Filip told me all that.

I know, all this does not help you. You want to hear something from his stay in Italy or even before that? Well, he worked for state research, you know. No, not spy, in that time everything belonged to the state. No, first time he traveled abroad was later, from Canada. First, he worked for American Company. He made good friends there, he said they were very practical people. And young in mind. No, I don't know what he meant, maybe that they sometimes behave like children. No, that is not my opinion, it is just a common impression. What is my opinion? Hold it - I have a feeling I am being interrogated, after all. You should have told me about it beforehand, instead of telling me that you just need information. Why, that's not nice of you, Mr. FBI! Oh, yes, I understand: you wanted me to blurt out everything I knew.

The force of habit? Asking questions? But of course, ask away; I am not offended. No, I do not think it was a suicide. No good-bye letter, either? Most suicides leave a letter behind. On the other side, one could see that there was something under the mask he put on his face. Something that bothered him, something more than the fact she left him. I don't know, he was rather gay in public. No, I do not mean *gay*; he was a heterosexual, that's for sure. Yes, girls from single-bars and occasional acquaintances, you know how it goes with divorcees. You are not divorced? Neither am I - I am not even married. As they say: *the bachelor is a man who doesn't make the same mistake once*. No, he didn't date anybody, not regularly. Workaholic? Yes, I know it doesn't mean he drunk at work! Well, he may have been obsessed with work, but I haven't seen him too much after all. And outside the work, we don't talk about it. We are not paid for it, you know?

Cynic? No, Sir, I am a cynic, he was more like a sad romantic, especially with that *Hurontario* thing. Sometimes, when we drank a little, he talked more about it. I think it was supposed to be something like some kind of home. First he left his country and then he even lost his wife, his family. He had a dog for a while, but then the pooch died. Yes, he loved music, the one they call classical jazz, but he also played some instrument, I suppose. But what that's got to do with the fact that he disappeared?

If he got along well with the other employees? Of course, we all get along very well, just ask our Personnel Department - excuse me - the Department of Human Resources. No, we do not have other resources, like horses, for instances. Could you imagine for instance the Department of Horsing Around? Girls at work? Yes, he was nice to them, said "hello" but nothing more. It is not allowed. Yes, some wives of our employees are also working for our company, but in all decency. What do I mean by that? I am sorry, that was just a joke. You know: when somebody says something and the others start laughing, sometimes for no apparent reason.

No, last time I saw him he looked quite normal, assuming one can actually look "normal". But of course, our job makes some strange fellows, but which job doesn't? He had a split personality like any other immigrant, but we get used to it, most of us, anyway. Him? Some don't get used to it at all; they are chronically homesick. No, I do not think he had any weapon. Yes, I've heard that you can buy a gun here - you can get a permit for ten sollars. Quite a big piece, I was told, nothing like the "Saturday Night Special" they sell in New York. But you don't sell it to foreigners and he couldn't smuggle it from Canada, no Sir.

- - -

So it looks to me that your investigation is in a *dead point*, pardon the pun. They haven't found his body, dead or alive, and I haven't told you too much, either. Filip Martinec is missing, period. Are you sure he didn't return back to Canada? You have asked at airports, I guess? How about our company in Burlington? It was them who triggered alarm? Mr. Dillon - oh, he called them! How about his apartment there; is anything missing there? Of course, you were there already and that thing with calling her by the telephone? Yes, you were just testing me if I am not hiding anything. And how about here, in his hotel? Why, you don't even know what was there! I do know - he invited me there for a drink. He had there a wedding photo on the night table and behind the glass, there was an old train ticket from his last trip to the border, Czech border. What, the ticket is not there? Do you know it for sure?

Good, then maybe I can help you, after all. Why don't you ask around the town if somebody was buying a back-pack about two weeks ago? No, the ordinary knapsack. Why? He needed it to get back, to cross the Alps again. But I have already told that you he liked to walk. No, he just needed to erase everything, to put it back, if you know what I mean. You don't know? I am not surprised - I'd be surprised if you do understand. It's like this: there are great escapes and great returns. Sometimes you need more courage for the latter. Something called him, like once before, and he stopped everything he was doing and went. They call it the voice of our heart - or something like that. . .

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INCLINATIONS: MORE COMPUTER GENERATED POETRY

DISTANT BIRDSONG

as I fear your sensation

distant birdsong and the laughter of wolves
can lead only to our delusion
cultivate relaxation
and do not forget
with complete absorption
someone has said that what you are can never be destroyed
I know you in this darkness, on sunday afternoon

STRANGE FITS OF DECAY

while we all seek the experience of being alive
strange fits of decay
become transfigured in another pattern
move into the third dimension, she said
and notice as certain sly statues study the dream
make me your instrument
you're not even listening to me...

THOUGHTS

beasts and wild things
by the light of the moon
the tender beginnings of craziness
with courage to endure
accusing voices calling out from dreams
magic
they don't belong in a civilized world
this is how we know each other

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HURONTARIA - 4A/98



Canadian Czech-out Enzine • Kanadsko-český občasník.

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Commentary:

Today, we will concentrate on things technical. First, we separated English and Czech parts and each has its own documet (page). They can be now loaded twice faster (by the way: the loading is finished, when the flags start moving). If you want to cut short your time on NET, just save it (best in HTML format) and read it later, off NET. You can read it best by your browser, but if you want the pictures, too, you have to save them extra and in the same directory as text. How? Just click your right mouse button on the picture and on the pop-up menu click on "Save picture as". We do not use too many pictures here, because they are like the old age: they are consuming both memory and time.

The same applies for printing, moreover you can now print each part separately. We are very pleased, that we are gaining readers in both Americas as well as in Europe and we are negotiating links to Huronataria in Wilson (Capital of Czech Kansas) and elsewhere. We also created the new mirror, that is the second address - you will find it at the bottom of the Title Page. Please put it in your bookmarks. Why? The speed of access is different for different parts of the world and the time of day. If you experience troubles with some of them, pls let us know. Czech part is now issued in two formats: CE1250 (Windows) and "Bez diakritiky" - that is without diacritic.

One more thing: You may find here a certain number of errors and typos. For that we sincerely apologize and we hope it will surely improve with time.

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Note: Part B is in Czech, and the content is different. Fro Part B, go back to Title Page.



What, freedom of speech? So why did my lawyer tell me that I have "a right to remain silent"?

Pls send me a mail to my address below; your comments will be appreciated. If you want to receive announcement of the new issue by mail, add the word SUBSCRIBE. Prosím pište mi na adresu dole, vaše pøipomínky jsou mi cenné. Jestli chcete být nformováni e-mailem, když vyjde nové èíslo, pøipište slovo SUBSCRIBE.

Webmaster Jan(Honza) ©hurychj@hurontel.on.ca

OTHER DIMENSIONS: INTELLIGENCE - ARTIFICIAL OR SUPERFICIAL? (Translation from engine AmberZine)

It happened on one of those seminars of IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers) in San Diego, California. The lecturer, otherwise quite serious fellow, was telling us the story about baboons, yes, the same baboons I have mentioned in my commentary to the Issue 1 of this engine. The purpose was rather obvious: he didn't mean baboons at all and if there was a moral in the story, it was threefold.

First - copycats only follow, they can NEVER lead. Second - some of new ideas may come just from an impulse but there is nothing wrong with THAT. Third - it helps to turn around once a while, to see WHO is following you (if anybody at all).

Now I don't think that the story was intended in any way to confirm or deny the Darwinism or even retro-Darwinism (the theory that the mankind is now slowly evolving backwards). Neither is this article promoting one or another opinion about the origin of Man. On the contrary, it is merely the criticism of the facts we know, the facts which still do not amount to much.

And *Other Dimensions* - what are they? In the case of Darwinism versus Creationism, it is obviously the *artificial life* and the emphasis is on the word *artificial*. No, here we are

not concerned about *the life itself*, but about its highest, let just say "intelligent" forms.

And here you have it. It was to my surprise, that even Richard Dawkins (English biologist) used in his books - but not in his interview with me - the term *intelligent forms*. He claimed, of course, that they developed thanks to the *natural selection* and that intelligence is not *the beginning of it all*, not at all. Let's come to the point then: what is that so called *intelligence*?

I believe it was Mark Twain, who once quipped: "There is only one most intelligent child in the world and every mother has it." Well, intelligence was always considered as unique human-only quality and apparently it can be even measured by IQ (where "I" does not stand for *ignorance*, presumably). Yes, we all are intelligent, to the certain degree, anyway. How else we could call ourselves *Homo Sapiens*, the Wise Man? Our only trouble is that we do not know how to define the intelligence itself. You do not need to worry, I will not try it to do it here either, since I would be probably the first one who does not agree with myself.

And if that is not enough, we are also talking about the *artificial* intelligence, in order to distinguish it from the other one, the *natural* one. Well, the word "natural" has several meanings. It can mean: inborn, in accordance with with nature, normal and of course in certain cases, even "simpleminded". (Ever heard the saying: Intelligence can be artificial, but stupidity can be only natural?)

No, that does not get us too far. Actually, I prefer to call it "intelligent force" rather than just "intelligence". It's like this: the intelligence alone is not enough - it has to have the ability to create and of course to use that ability as well. Similarly, like the term *energy* which was originally meant only as "*the ability to perform work*" (and now is used for almost anything), the word *force* is today used in many connections. Just remember the salute "May the force be with you!" from the movie Star Wars.

For the meantime, the term *force* should be just enough, until we really find out what it is. The more important is the adjective *intelligent*. Every act of creation needs certain level of intelligence as any good design does. Even in the evolution, the intelligence must appear in certain stage - how else we could become intelligent beings? However, if you follow that hundred year quarrel between evolutionists and creationists, you don't hear the word intelligence very often. Still, I believe it is the crux of the problem. The right question should be: "How comes that we are so intelligent? Is it by accident or was it inevitable? And while we are so smart, how comes we don't even know WHY we are so smart?"

Those questions became more and more pressing with the arrival of computers and

especially now, during certain stagnation of *their* evolution. Yes, that's right, I said "stagnation"! For almost twenty years now, we are waiting for the so called fifth or umpteenth generation of computers, intelligent computers promised by Japanese or others. Where are those machines that were supposed to write like Shakespeare or robots, playing violins - I mean real violins - like Maestro Pagannini? The top of computer science is still (for many, anyway) our good old word processor and the best robots we ever made were those we turned people into.

No, of course I am not serious: there was some success, but you have to look closer to see it. The question is: Do we have any real goal in this direction, any REACHABLE goal at all? To create artificial intelligence, we need the intelligent *approach* first. Apparently, we are mostly copying what we see, the same way the baboons in our story did. Unfortunately, that has very little to do with *real* intelligence . . .

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LIFE: THE OLD DAKOTA LEGEND

The old-timer I have met in Deadwood, South Dakota, told me that one of "them mounteens" nearby got its name thanks to this old, very old story:

Long time ago, there was one lonely stagecoach station at the foot of that mountain - the place they used to change horses and travellers could stretch their legs. Then gold was found in Black Hills and the place grew up and pretty soon, there was a sallon, the place one can eat and drink, but - and this is important "but" - with only one outhouse. Maybe because of food or maybe because of the local water, the outhouse was all the time busy, or shall we say, occupied, if you know what I mean.

And then came the day famous Bill Hickock himself stopped there. He had a dinner there and shortly afterwards he quickly left for the famous, or rather infamous place. He knocked on the door and impatiently asked the occupant to leave.

"I cannot, I am not finished yet," answered the fellow inside and judging by his voice, he was obviously under some kind of pressure.

"So hurry up and finish it!" shouted Bill. Well, you may think that there were plenty of bushes around but don't forget, this part of the country was already "ceevilized" and Bill was nothing but a gentleman. Moreover, he was already under similar strain and I guess if somebody would see him then, he could easily think of him as another "desperado",

so much was he desperate to get in.

" I am rushing as much as I can," screamed the poor prisoner inside the box.

" And I will help you to rush more!" exclaimed Bill, now wild with pain, and he started to shoot off his pistols in the air...

Needless to say, the outhouse was empty in a second. And that's how he's got his nickname, I mean Bill, of course. He became "Wild" Bill Hickock and the place was called *Rushmore* ever since and evermore...

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SHORT STORY: THE MIRROR MIRAGE

It was disturbing, to say the least. The man who was looking at me from the mirror was somehow different from me, but he surely looked like me, in all details. Except for one: his eyes were scanning me with quite obvious hate and he did not even try to hide it. That was of course very unusual: I, Charlie Goodman, always enjoyed watching myself, in the mirror that is. You see, I hate being hated, especially by myself.

Rather surprized, I asked him: "You don't like me, do you?", but he did not answer.

"What have I done to you?"

This time, he gave me a smile. I am sure that you are familiar with that kind of smile - sweet and full of poison. Then he opened his mouth and said slowly, but distinctly: "You fool!" Well, believe it or not, that was all. Nothing more happened. Usually, I do every morning some awfull singing or monkey faces in front of the mirror, but that morning I didn't feel like it at all. Instead, I chose a cowardly retreat, but it was too late: my day was spoiled already.

I must have met George Walker first time somehow, but it would be impossible for me to remember when it actually happened. He was everything I was not: logical, decisive, very energetic. I must confess that I am rather shy and introvert, the type they usually call *a dreamer*. We had only one thing in common: we both liked the game of squash. And we met together every week for a game or two and then sat down for a beer or two, talking about those little things the life is made of.

The one reason our friendship lasted that long was that he never had me as his patient. Yes, George was a doctor, psychotherapist for that matter. I sometimes picked him up in his office, but never as a patient. Once I even jokingly arranged the sign on his office door,

G.A. WALKER
THERAPIST
to look like:
G.A. WALKER
THE RAPIST

and good old George almost laughed his head off. Sometimes I did talk about my problems and got his "over-the-counter" advice. It was reassuring to hear from him that I am O.K., but then again, I never had any serious problems, mental problems that is. Rather scared, I did tell him what happened. George obviously didn't believe the word I said, but he was too much of a professional to tell me that directly. Instead, he asked me some obscure questions.

The final result was that I had become alarmed, all the same, and so I asked: "Do you think there is something wrong with me?"

Being too busy with the ball, he just uttered: "It's not serious, if you mean that."

"But what is it, George?" I pressed on.

He was not doing too well with the game - actually he was losing - so he snapped back: "It's too early to tell!"

I couldn't hide my disappointment, but while I still had few more questions, I held them back. I hate to look anxious or even ignorant and besides, he was obviously not in good mood. So we had an obligatory beer after the game, talked a little about nothing and then we parted.

needless to say, I couldn't get it off my mind. You know my kind: we worry all the time and the troubles always follow - maybe just because we worry too much.

Two days later, when I was shaving, the image in my mirror suddenly opened the mouth again and said quite distinctly: "You stupid, stupid fool!" There was no anger in that voice, just cool and concentrated hate. I splashed my face with cold water and run away from the bathroom. Maybe George did have a reason to be concerned, after all.

One week later, I have talked to George again. He refused to see me in his office - he didn't explain why. So we met in a restaurant, a small diner at the corner. And we talked about my family history, my uncle's suicide, my mother's divorce and all those apparently unimportant things which make shrinks feeling happy. I could not help noticing that he didn't believe a word I said. I wasn't sure whether he couldn't make the diagnosis or just didn't want to make it. Or even worse: maybe he had already made one and didn't want to tell me!

"You really think I am being hysterical?" I tried him again, in futile hope to learn something new.

"Oh, no," he objected, "this is not a case of simple hysteria. Schizophrenia, then?"

"Maybe and then again, maybe not." His voice sounded casually, but I could hear in it an echo of my hidden worries.

"And how about the multiple personality? Isn't it the same thing?"

"But of course not! In your case, it could be easily just an illusion," he offered.

"You mean hallucination?" I inquired.

"Oh no, not necessarily. Illusions can be perfectly normal physical phenomena, same as *fata morgana* or the picture you see in your television, for instance. Hallucinations, on the other hand, are not normal at all."

"By *fata morgana* you mean something like a mirage?" He nodded his head.

"Is there anything else you left out from your list, George?"

"But of course," he said, "it could be a wishfull thinking. If you wish strongly enough, things happen. Haven't you ever noticed?"

It was so absurd, that I had to laugh: "That can cover almost anything!"

"Hell, no," he snapped, "there is still one more possibility!"

"And that is?"

"Magic, my dear friend, the magic! You believe in magic, I presume?"

"No, but I bet you can prove to me it does exist!"

"Oh, no, how can I prove it? It's the same with the music or spoken word: now it's here and then it is gone. It simply dissapears, evaporates - the real magic."

"And how about the tape recordings, ha!" I argued.

He raised his brows: "Oh yes, recordings. Would you believe that one of my patients has a fixed idea that the magnetic tape is actually storing time, not just sound? For him the play-back is actually a time-back. He thinks we can return the moment back and live it over and over again."

"And how about you? Do you believe in magic, doctor?"

"But of course. Life is the magic of its own. The mystery of birth, the enigma of death."

It's all magic."

"What's so obscure about death?" I wondered.

" Well," he explained, "we people cannot imagine the things with no beginning or without any end. And still, we do not want to end, to die, hoping we can live forever in some kind of metamorphosis, or maybe in suspended animation. But you have to ask your priest about those things; I am only a doctor, my friend."

He always annoyed me when he called me his friend. In a sense, yes, I was his friend. But was he my friend too? "Listen George," I wouldn't give up," I do want to know, I NEED to know! What is your diagnosis?"

"None of the above and then again, maybe all of the above. But in your case, I wouldn't worry," he added, quickly finished his beer and blaming his busy schedule, he left me. " No, George," I thought, " YOU do not need to worry, I do."

And I was right: the man in the mirror was there to stay. He did show up every morning, with his screwed-up, penetrating eyes, his husky voice full of mockery. And what's more: he was obviously able to read my thoughts. He called me names, ridiculed my feelings, offended everything I have ever loved. He was giving me orders I tried very hard not to obey. First I was annoyed, then shaken and eventually I was really afraid of him. That's what happens when one does not know what is happening. I could stand the offence, the ridicule, even the pain - I just had to know *why*.

I had to talk to George again. This time he agreed to see me in his office. His nurse, he called her Debbie, was quite a nice girl, the type you can easily fall in love with. Smiling, she pointed to the door: "Mr. Goodman, please, go right in!" George shook my hand and motioned me to lay down on the couch in the corner. I was alarmed: "But you already said I am not one of your hysterical patients!"

" You are not a patient, Charlie," he said, "you are my friend." That day, his questions were quite easy and when I was leaving his office, I felt much better. Still, something was bothering me, but I could not put my finger on it.

For several days, I felt great. You know how it is: you can hardly forget anything when you are trying too hard. So I was not trying at all and it worked pretty well. I was also virtually overloaded with my work and a small pain can sometimes overshadow the big one. How long it lasted, I can't tell. All I know it started again: The stranger in the mirror kept coming onto me, bringing up all memories of my past, the memories that always bothered me, one way or another. Soon he got me involved in our dialogs again.

As you probably guessed, it only made the things worse. He knew me better than I could ever know him: who was I, my feelings, my fears, all of my past and he somehow could even predict my future. "Make no mistake about it," he told me, "you are going to end up very badly. Once a loser, always loser. Your life - what does it amount to? Series of failures slightly flavoured with blunders. You gave the term "nobody" a completely new meaning! Success? That's not the word in your vocabulary, Charlie! You miserable bastard, you don't even deserve to live!"

Well, I am relatively modest man and I don't have any great ambitions. But I believe I have had my share in life and time by time even some moments of satisfaction. There were times I was quite content with myself. Later, it was enough to keep me going when my loving wife died or when I was diagnosed as having cancer - by mistake of course.

But my double, my *doppelganger*, was trying to destroy all the remaining self-confidence I ever had. He obviously hated me, but why? Was it a revenge for something I have done in my past or in my previous life? That is of course if I ever had any. One thing was certain: he wanted me to lose my mind and he was doing an extremely good job.

During my visits, George was trying to disperse my worries about schizophrenia. "Sure," he said, "some symptoms are here, such as visual delusions, hearing of voices, even that paranoid idea that somebody is trying to get you. But we have to be careful with our diagnosis. By the way, schizophrenia is not as the name would suggest the *real* split personality. That is entirely different thing." He then tried to cheer me up with a joke: "Did you hear this one: 'Doctor, doctor, I have a split personality and we hate each other; what am I to do?' ' Well,' said the doctor, 'bring the other fellow to me, we'll see what could be done. But of course you have to pay twice, haha!' "

Seeing good old George laughing made me feel somehow relieved. You see, I have a deep trust in doctors: one of them really saved my life when I was still a child. "If I diagnose you as a *schizo*," George carried on, "and I say IF, then you may end up being hospitalized, do you realize that? No, I cannot do that to you, Charlie! But for the meantime, I'll give you some vitamins and we'll see..."

"Vitamins?" I interrupted, "just vitamins?"

"Of course," he nodded, " those are the best medications we have, they just happened to be called vitamins, too. More than fifty percent of all patients can completely recover thanks to them."

"Completely recover? What does that really mean, George?" I wondered.

"By complete recovery we mean the ability to go back to work. There are of course relapses, but very mild. On the other hand, the medication is quite harmless, practically

with no side-effects. Rest assured that I am doing my best. Actually I couldn't have done more even for myself, that is if I was in your place, haha," he joked again. And I had to laugh with him.

Well, it did not help me at all; the medication, I mean. In growing desperation, I went to local library and borrowed several books about the subject. Not too cheerful reading, mind you! Firstly, even the experts must admit they don't know the real cause of it. Secondly, they all more or less agree that there may be no cure at all; the real cure, if you know what I mean. Some medications help, surely, but they do not eliminate the cause, which is not known, e.t.c. There you have it - the real vicious circle! Come to think of it, my final impression was that maybe - just maybe - schizophrenia should not be classified as a sickness at all!

There are the things nobody knows too much about and therefore anybody can claim to be an expert in that field. In spite of all that skepticism, I decided not to give up. What could I possibly lose? Somebody over there is on to get me. Fine, so I would fight back. And boy, I surely did! At first, the mirror-man did not answer my insults, but later, he couldn't stand them either. He called me names and I called him names. And since I didn't know anything about his past, I simply invented it. It was actually my own past, but much worse: whomever I ever harmed, he even murdered, all of those I liked, he hated; and of course they all hated him back.

I started to feel much better. It was like getting back my freedom, my life. Suddenly, I realized I could be actually more cruel than he would ever be: more heartless, more sadistic. more anything. He shook with each of my insults and there was growing fear in his eyes, the eyes that used to be mine. I was satisfied: I have found my meaner Self, my own Mister Hyde.

Every morning I called him up to the mirror. He started to look terrible and his face was changing: it was not my face any more. The destruction was setting up: more and more wrinkles, eyes disappearing in their sockets, skin shrinking and turning grey. In few weeks, I couldn't recognize him - or rather myself - any more. Then one day I was shocked: there, in the mirror, I was looking at the face of my friend George! At first, I did not believe my eyes; no, it couldn't be him. After all, he claimed he was my friend! But was he? And then, I understood: it was HIM who was after me, all that time. I kept looking at his slightly balded scalp, drooping mouth, missing tooth at the upper left; yes, it was him all right!

Suddenly everything became quite clear: George simply stole my face and gave me his in return! The next thing he would be after is my soul, my sanity! Yes, it all fitted nicely

together: his hesitation to treat me, the refusal to make diagnosis and then his mysterious medications. I had to stop him; I might still have enough time to prevent that disaster! And so I went to see him again.

"And how is the medication working now?" he asked as usual and I replied "Fine, fine!" because I wanted him to talk. And he surely did, all that usual gibberish, while he was secretly watching my reactions.

Then I could not stand it any more: "Haven't you noticed anything new, George?"

He pretended not to understand me. "Noticed what, Charlie?"

"Anything new," I repeated, "NEW, you know?"

"Is there something you want to tell me?" he asked in all innocence, but his shifty eyes betrayed him. There was a fear hidden in them and so I answered, with the same smile he used on me before: "My face, George, my face of course!"

"What's wrong with your face?" he pretended he didn't understand, but I decided to cut it short: "here, look, it's not my face George, not anymore; don't you see?"

"And whose face it is then, Charlie?" he said with the tone - I am sure - he used with his regular patients.

That of course irritated me extremely: "It is your face, George, your bloody face; don't you recognize it? Until recently, it belong to you, and now you switched our faces, you swine!"

"But look, Charlie, look at me, I have my own face, not yours; look at me!" he tried to explain and I suddenly I saw he was right. We both had now the same face - his face! I could here myself screaming: "You are hiding my face under yours, you thief! Give it back to me, George, or should I rather call you *Charlie* now?"

He tried to lecture me again: "Oh, no, Charlie, you don't understand! This is the side-effect of the medications I gave you. Sometimes it happens, but it will soon go away, I can promise you. Be patient Charlie, just for a few more weeks; we are almost there, believe me!"

"Almost where, George? There, where you wanted me to be? Yes and it almost worked, you sonovabitch! Besides, haven't you said that there would be no sideeffects? You tricked me, but now, I want my face back. Where is it? Hand it to me!"

He stopped acting and his fear was now quite obvious: "I cannot, Charlie, please, you know I cannot give it back to you! I don't have it!" he begged.

"OK, then I'll take it back myself, George. You cannot fool me, you idiot, I know it's hidden under your mask! I will take it, even if I have to rip it off and then I will also cut your treacherous miserable heart out!" I grabbed him by his shoulders, screaming at the

top of my lungs: "Give me back my face, you bastard!" He struggled and wanted to say something, but he could not: my hands were already on his throat, squeezing, and choking. Slowly, I increased the pressure and his face turned red. It was an ugly sight, his bulging eyes and opened, gasping mouth. Nothing but gargling sound was coming from his broken windpipe and after a while it stopped, too.

I released the grip and his lifeless body folded down on the floor like a raggedy puppet. And suddenly - very, very slowly - he started to change right before my eyes. The wrinkles on his forehead were disappearing, his skin regained some color and his scalp was soon covered with thick, black hair. I was staring in my very own face again.

At that moment somebody knocked on the door. "Come in," I replied and Debbie, who was apparently disturbed by all that noise, entered the room.

"Is everything all right?" she asked.

"Why, of course," I assured her," but tell me, what about that fellow - what's his name, oh yes - Charlie Goodman?"

"He missed his appointment again," she informed me and obviously reading my thoughts, she added: " Shall I make another one for him, say next week?"

"Please do," I agreed, "I have a feeling that he will show up again."

"Yes, doctor," she replied and left. As I have said before, she is a very good nurse and quite nice to me. She is also much more understanding than the other nurses around here, you know . . .

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INCLINATIONS: POETRY

ILLUSIONS OF LOVE

There is the time for joy and sorrow,
the time to lend and time to borrow
yesterday's feelings for tomorrow.
(Then comes confusion -
love is illusion.)

It's passion warms in heavy rain,
to control it we try in vain,

gives little pleasure, lots of pain.
(Remains conclusion:
love is delusion.)

When lost, it turns our heart in stone.
Since we can't bear to live alone,
on happiness we take a loan.
(Lifeblood transfusion -
lover's allusion.)

So comes the end and then fresh start
with promise, that we never part.
Being in love is hardly being smart.
(Instead of fusion -
double seclusion.)

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Commentary:

Well, things sometimes happen. That's not an excuse, just a fact : I almost didn't finish this Issue. Well, almost: I pinched my spinal nerve and we - me and my wife - spent an hour trying to get me in our car, since I was too proud to take an ambulance. In the meantime, the emergency ward in our little hospital was extremely busy, too: one complicated delivery of a baby and only one doctor on duty. So we waited for two hours - and believe me, those were the longest two hours in my life . . .

But that's O.K. I suppose the new life has a priority, at least it should have. Then I got my shot, suffered one painfull trip back home and spent the night half standing, half leaning on crutches. Crutches, conveniently saved from my wife's last ski accident, helped me to lower the weight of the upper part of my torso, since I could neither sit nor lay down. Even now, after finishing this Issue, I still have some pain as a reminder to be more carefull next time. So all's well when end's well. I guess one needs this lesson to shake up and change his (hers) priorities. Meanwhile, life goes on and on . . .

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Other Dimensions: THE FAIRY TALE

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Note: Part B is in Czech, and the content is different. Fro Part B, go back to Title Page.

Uncle Sasquatch? He is the black sheep of our family . . .



Pls send me a mail to my address below; your comments will be appreciated. If you want to receive announcement of the new issue by mail, add the word SUBSCRIBE. We would also appreciate if you let us know where did you learn about Hurontaria.

Webmaster Jan(Honza) ©hurychj@hurontel.on.ca

Text follows:

OTHER DIMENSIONS: THE FAIRY TALE

There was once a politician, who lost his job - well, it happens sometimes, even in the fairy tales. Having generous pension, he went to study medicine at the Unnamed University. Later, he graduated with honors, which was rather superfluous, since he was already called the "Most Honorable". Soon he opened his office as a practitioner in some faraway county, in the province of your choice.

He immediately used his political influenza (I guess he meant *the influence*) and soon he became famous; well, nobody really remembers what he was famous for. Nevertheless, he even wrote a book about his experiences, which he wittily called - " My experiences". Following are some of his advices to young doctors, quoted here with author's permission (he only asked us not to mention his name):

ABORTION:

I was always good in abortions - I have aborted all of my election promises - all were delivered prematurely, anyway.

FRACTURES:

The treatment of broken arms and legs has to wait - we have more important task at hand - we have to prevent prevent the break-up of the country, the break-up of bad news, etc.

POISONING:

Do not induce vomiting, just give the patient a speech - that will do the trick nicely.

HEADACHE:

If the person is a taxpayer, try to induce extra more pain and then promise to remove it all - you will be surprised how much people believe such nonsense. Supply generous amount of G.S.T. (Gastro-Shrinking Taxidermy).

DEFICIENCY:

This is similar to the budget deficit: just promise to lower it - in the meantime, why not increase it a little bit?

HEMORRHOIDS:

Problem caused by stress exerted on both halves of the brain. Use Preparation HoC (House of Commons).

FREE TREATMENT:

Promise them anything, but it has to be FREE. Even people who do not believe in free lunches may believe in Free Trade.

GAS:

Same as you did for inflation - it usually goes away with some rollover (or Rollaids).

FLU:

Lot's of lemons for patients *flu-ent* in both official languages. Remember there is no cure for flu, only some a relief of symptoms. It helps if you drink a lot.

FEVER:

Same as *fewer* (opportunities, jobs, cents per U.S. dollar, e.t.c.). Tell them to cool it.

MEDICARE:

Short for "Medium Care" (or less), simply nothing special. You never get rich that way...

NOTE:

Don't be surprised, if those treatments don't work. They did not work in the fairy tale, either.

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LIFE: GOOD GIRL SANDY

We named her Sandy. After a while, I just called her a *Good Girl*, maybe because she really was one. Her former owners must have been quite rough on her, judging by the way she mistrusted everyone. We treated her well, but even after two months with us, she still kept her distance. Apparently that happens to any dog when he changes his owners.

Once I lost her in the woods. I kept calling her but then I understood it was all my fault: she wasn't used to obey our commands. Desperate, I kept waiting for her. She didn't return until half an hour later, when I had already lost all hopes. I was mad at her, very mad, but then I realized how much I had really missed her and instead of scolding her, I only asked her: "Sandy, Good Girl, what took you so long?" She was obviously pleased to see me too and since then we became very good friends.

Some time later, just after my wife left for Europe, it happened: the layoff. I received my notice on Friday, just before my vacation. Sandy and I, we left for our cabin in Goderich and what followed seemed like the worst time of my life. The loss of job wasn't my fault, but of course I blamed myself all the same.

Sandy apparently sensed my troubles, because she was all that time around me. Once when I was contemplating my miserable situation, she came to me and stared at me as if she was trying to tell me something. I looked in her brown, deep eyes and suddenly realized that I could actually read her mind. It was incredibly fascinating, it was like we were tuned to the same wave, same frequency. "Don't worry", I could almost hear her saying, "I know what pain is and it will pass, believe me. Everything will be O.K." Then the light in her eyes went off and she returned back into her strange, obscure and silent world. During next days, my mood slowly improved and we spent few remaining days swimming in Huron Lake and finally, I lost all my worries.

When my wife returned, so did my good luck. I had found me a new job and everything seemed to return to normal. But it didn't: Sandy got sick and was becoming noticeably weaker and weaker. Our vet confirmed the worst, a tumor. It was too late to operate and all he could recommend was putting Sandy to sleep. He gave us some painkillers and for the last weekend with her, we went back to our old cabin at Huron, where we once were so happy together. Her pain subsided and she was very cheerful; she probably believed her troubles were over, too.

When leaving vet's office, my wife and I we couldn't help crying. We also promised ourselves never to have another dog again.

Not too long after however, we broke our promise. Tara is still a puppy and rather spoiled one, too. We are close friends now and sometimes, when I look in her deep, brown eyes, I could hear myself whispering to her: "*Sandy, Good Girl, what took you so long?*"

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SHORT STORY: JUST A TEMPORARY FAILURE

He came to me dressed like some insurance man, at least he looked like one: shorter, slightly obese, very much the nagging type.

"Mr. Leblanc," he said, "my name is Calhoun and I represent the company called *Astral Projections*. We are doing some kind of a market research, so I would like to ask you few questions, but you are in no obligation to answer any of them."

Well, I said to myself, he starts with questionnaire, as usual, and then he will end with an offer to sell. So what - I'll let him talk and throw him out later. The salesman who gains your sympathies is usually the most cunning of them all.

"Ask away," I said friendly, yet his first question took my breath away.

"How much longer do you think you will live?"

"Long enough," I answered, with forced smile.

"Yes," he agreed, but obviously not with me, "most people we asked were thinking the same. But believe me, the statistics for the people of your age are not so encouraging. People with health problems as yours live in average only three more years, most of them do not survive two years. When have you had your last chek-up?"

About a month ago," I lied, "and my doctor found me in perfect health." That was also a lie, of course.

"Yes," he carried on, like an answering machine, "nobody could believe it can develop so suddenly." That made me to think: where could he learn that? My doctor would never reveal such information: if I sue him, he might lose his license.

"If you know everything, why do you ask?" I snapped back without trying to hide my frustration.

"Jerry," he introduced himself, "please call me Jerry. Good question," he added, "very good question."

I ignored his suggestion and carried on: "Would you please stick to the point? What are you really selling? Some life insurance? Thanks, but no thanks! I am not married."

"I know," he said patiently, " we have checked all your personal data in advance. Now there you have it: we are offering you the contract, which will benefit directly you, actually only you. If you sign the contract, we will guarantee that you will live seven more years, in health and happiness."

I had to laugh: "I do not want to destroy your illusions, but I want to live much longer and without your contract. You bothered yourself for nothing. So good bye to you!"

"I beg your pardon, "he interrupted, "but your mother also died because of heart problem and at the same age you are now."

How could he possibly know this? I could not resist wondering: "Listen, I know little about modern medicine and I doubt that even your company can . . .

He quickly cut in: "Maybe some practical demonstration will help here more. Your eyesight is pretty bad, isn't it? "

"So what," I retorted," five dioptries is five dioptries, that can be fixed by proper glasses."

"Take them off, please," he said. I did what he told me, without actually knowing why.

"How do you see me now?" he wanted to know.

"Like a big blurry spot," I laughed. Then something cracked, like if somebody's breaking the pencil.

"What are you doing?" I screamed, hoping, that was not what I had suspected.

"I just broke your glasses," he replied, "you won't need them anymore."

My laugh froze right in my stomach. "No, no, don't worry. It's O.K.," he added, snapped his fingers and the picture started to clear itself. Few more seconds and really: I could see again, even that broken pair of glasses on the table!

"Wait a minute!" I objected. "Another of your tricks, right? It will come back after you leave, right? You better fix those glasses right now or you will have to pay for them!"

"It won't come back, I assure you. Even so, if it does, we will gladly reimburse you." He really knew how to get my attention.

"But," I tried to guess, "if I don't do business with you, it will come back, right? I knew

there is a trick somewhere!"

"Definitely not, it will not come back again." He sounded serious. "Consider it the demonstration of our services, something like a *free* sample. By the way," he added, "if you live only one more year or two, your eyesight will be the last thing on your mind."

"Seven years you said," I voiced my thoughts. "Well, and how much it will cost me?"

"It is all in this written agreement," he smiled and handed me a paper, realizing that I was hooked already.

"And what if I want to cancel the deal? Or maybe prolong it?"

"Unfortunately, seven years is the fixed term. You cannot cancel it and later changes of the contract are not permitted, either. I have to stress that here in advance."

"But listen, haven't I heard that before? It may appear ridiculous, but it all sounds more like some contract with devil. But surely you are not one of them . . . "

"But of course I am," he interrupted. "Modern times require modern approach," he said, but it sounded more like an apology than explanation.

"Don't get me wrong, but as I recollect, you used to offer your clients much more: eternal youth, love of women, riches, supreme wisdom . . . "

"And you think that gift of live is something less?" he responded with indisputable logic.

"And what about that signature in own blood?"

" Just artistic cliché, " he uttered, "the ink will do. We do not want you to get infection or even die before the end of contract, do we?" He obviously used that joke often, judging by the way he laughed.

"But I still can't believe it," I continued. You want me to sign the contract for a grant of another seven years of life. And then what?"

"Then nothing," he assured me.

"Except that you will take me down to the everlasting hell," I could not help laughing.

"Oh, nothing like that," he assured me. " Hell and heaven are just names, nothing more."

"So what is it you want?" I was losing my patience.

"Nothing too much, just your soul immortal."

"But excuse me, " I wondered, "if there is no heaven nor hell, how comes that there is a soul immortal? And how about the God Almighty?"

"But off course, God exists, from eternity to eternity. There is also the devil - actually many of them, not just me," he assured me.

"But what are they doing then?" I asked again. "Are they also helping many good souls to switch sides? Is that the everlasting fight between *good* and *evil*?"

"No, certainly not," he denied it and I could see from the expression on his face how naive my question apparently was. "It is just a difference of opinion. You see, our competition is trying to convince you - by the way not too successfully - that the *goodness* is not what is good for you, but what is good for the others. And after death, that is if you behave, you can get to heaven. But you are not too religious, are you?"

"Maybe," I did not want to admit it, not to the devil, anyway. "But I believe in the good and bad, in that old-fashioned sense, so the people will not eat each other alive, you know."

"I cannot agree more," he tried to calm me down. "Even if for different reason than yours," he laughed. "Then again, if you do not believe in eternal life, the extension of this life is your only alternative. It will do no harm to anybody, don't you agree?"

"Listen," I was again skeptical, "you can cure my vision permanently, but you cannot let me live forever?"

"No, no," he argued, "I didn't say you were cured permanently - only till you die! I thought it was understood! It's like the postponement, if you know what I mean. However," he tried to gain the time, "you do not need to sign it right away. Think it over. We want our customers to be fully satisfied."

I bet you do, I thought but instead, I asked: "When do you need my answer?"

"In a week," was his reply, "in a week. But remember, the answer can be only YES or NO, no exceptions." He said good-bye or rather bad-bye and disappeared. He did not even leave the smell of sulphur behind him, as he should, if I remember correctly. But

then again, my religious education was quite far from perfect.

I was always afraid of death. No, I certainly was no coward and I have escaped death several times, but I never tried to provoke her, either. What was bothering me, was that nothing, which follows afterwards. Sure, they say there is a life after death, but nobody yet came back to confirm it. I just couldn't imagine myself as a zero, nonexistent quantity, vacuum. No breathing, no thinking, no life? And forever and ever, Amen?

Neither was I attracted by the image of heaven, full of people in their underwear, listening to the rather boring sounds of harps. If I could choose, I would rather prefer Moslem heaven, full of food, drinks, women . . .

But I do not believe in hell either, hell as a corrective institution, anyway. I just cannot imagine devil being so stupid to build enormous barbecue just to please his nostrils with the smell of burning flesh.

I have to admit, however, that devil's offer was tempting enough - I was just afraid he may be cheating. What if I could actually live longer than seven years? That would be a dirty trick! But then again, he was the devil, after all! And I don't like to make decision, any decision, especially one concerning my own life. There is a reason for it: I seldom make a right choice. To get me in situation where I have to make such a decision was a devilish move itself! I was also mad he impressed me with his cheap magic, the one with glasses. I just could not figure it out. What's more, I really did not need glasses at all, afterwards.

Well, I couldn't decide and as the end of the week was approaching, I was worried more and more. I couldn't sleep, either. Then I got an idea and my sixth sense told me that it was the only solution. I also realized that Calhoun didn't tell me when and where we should meet. Suddenly, the phone was ringing.

"My friend," said he, "you are now probably wondering how can you contact me." Oh God, or rather devil I thought, he knows everything! We settled the date for Monday - I still needed the coming weekend to detail my plan.

As soon as he entered the room, he came to the point. "So Sir," he said (smiling, of course)," what it will be?"

" It depends on you," I replied smartly. "If you give me the better deal, my answer is YES."

"But no, no," he was suddenly alarmed, you cannot . . . Didn't I tell you that you must answer only YES or NO?"

"I must, must I?" I was teasing him. "After all those years you still don't know how to treat a customer? Well then, my answer is YES, provided that you give me fifteen years of life."

Suddenly, Calhoun went mad. He was shaking, like a little devil in the puppet show I have seen as a kid. "I already told you. . .".

I jumped in: "Yes, you said that already, but let us put our cards on the table. I can see through you. You guys cannot extend my life at all. Somewhere up there, there is a book and it that book it is written that I have only seven years left. So you are actually offering me nothing and in return are asking for everything. It's a devil of an idea, but otherwise it can be also qualified as an ordinary fraud. Thanks, but no thanks! That's why you always keep your word, my friend! That's why I cannot ask for more! And you have guts to ask me in return to pledge the only thing I have - and up to now I wasn't even sure I had it - my own soul!"

He looked very much surprised, actually I believed he was genuinely surprised. "But this is absurd," he stuttered, "you cannot think that. . ."

"So, they've tricked you, too? My, my, Calhoun..."

He tried to sneak out of it, but couldn't find anything better than: "So I take it that your answer is NO, right?"

"Absolutely not," I insisted. "On the contrary, my answer is definitely YES, but with fifteen years!"

"Such an answer I cannot accept," said the poor devil and he looked sad.

I laughed: "But of course not, you cannot, but your boss can. Why don't you pass it on him, he will certainly know what to do with it. And don't forget to tell him that I know your bluff!"

That night I could not sleep at all. My insolence got me in trouble many times before, but this time it surely was a top. It did not occur to me when talking to Calhoun, that I should be afraid. He simply wasn't the type that makes people shudder. But now, it was different. Still, I just couldn't let the opportunity pass by, the opportunity, which does not

occur to everybody. And what's more, I was still curious what happens next. Come to think of it, I simply could have said NO and would not be bothered any more. Maybe. But then again, I would never know. . .

Mr. Devlin was an older gentleman, or so I thought, with shortage of breath and very lively eyes, so typical for small predators. He introduced himself as a director of *Astral Projections*. "The General Director?" I asked with a tinge of irony. He missed that however and assured me, that there is only one director. "My employees call be the Boss," he said, "but you can call me Lucifer."

"Let's come to the point shall we?" he suggested. "We have to fix that - well, let us say messy situation. Of course, Calhoun suggested to hush it up and I had to demote that mumbling idiot back to boilers.

" But I thought there is no such a thing as boilers, since there is no hell?" I looked surprised.

"Oh," he laughed, "of course not, it's just a figure of speech! But your weird idea, he added, as much as it is untrue, might reach the public and cause damage the reputation of our company."

"Well, it crossed my mind, too," I said in agreement.

"You mean that Calhoun is an idiot?" he asked.

" That, too, of course, but I meant the harm my idea could cause to *Astral Projections*.

He nodded: "That's why I wanted to talk to you in private." He apparently liked my sense of reality, because he smiled and explained it further: "Try to understand: we do not mind if our competition knows it, but we don't want the public to learn it from some newspaper. Public, my friend, is the supreme power in today's world," he added and in that very moment I knew I could not trust him. "I am therefore authorized to offer you anything for your silence. And there is very little we cannot do," he added. "Ask for money, fame, beautiful girls, the post of a minister in any government...Just don't ask for fifteen years of life."

"I beg your pardon," I replied rather politely, "but I thought my requirement is clear enough. You caused me harm by telling me I have only seven years to live. Can you imagine my suffering? Counting the remaining days and seeing them disappear forever?"

"Devilish, isn't it" he exclaimed without even trying to hide his satisfaction.

That drove me mad: "I will sue you, you had no right to tell me that!"

"But we did not tell you, did we?" he said truthfully. "You have found it out yourself, he added."

"So it is true, is it? Well, I knew it all along."

"Just your crazy imagination," he insisted.

"Crazy?" I asked. "Crazy enough to embarrass your company? Crazy enough so people should not learn about it?"

"O.K.," he agreed, "but please be reasonable. Do you want the most beautiful woman in the world? How about some gold or diamonds? All right, maybe you'd prefer the doctorate of the best University. Eternal youth, perhaps?"

I had to laugh: "Eternal youth? Eternal for seven years?"

Suddenly, he was upset. The devil obviously does not like to be laughed at. "Do not underestimate our power," he threatened. "You will be sorry.."

"But no, no - I wasn't laughing at you!" I tried to calm him down. "I believe the reason you came to see me and the fact that you are here, are serious enough. But why do you offer me such ridiculous things? And if I do not pretend I am stupid enough to accept them, you tried to scare the hell out of me, pardon the expression. But I am not afraid. I admit I was always afraid of death, but not any more. Now, when I know when I die, not earlier and not later, I have got tremendous feeling of peace in my mind. That makes me strong, do you understand?" Well, it was not entirely true, but I was gambling he couldn't see my bluff.

He did not give up easy: "But you do not know how are you going to die. You don't know how long it will take and how much pain it will bring."

"Oh no, don't tell me," I stopped him, since my courage had its limits, too. "If you tell me that, we will never make a deal!"

He stopped, realizing that he went too far. "Believe me or not, he said, this never happened to us before. During our whole existence, the existence of our company! People were trying to beg or outsmart us, but blackmail? Never!"

"Call it as you wish," I shrugged, "yours is hardly a fair play either."

"As you please, but you don't know what happens with the people like you."

Suddenly, I felt goose bumps on my body. That fear I felt that once before: it reminded me one situation in my life I thought I have long forgotten. It was a time for slow retreat: "Yes, yes - but don't forget I did not sign anything, so you cannot threaten me. Also, I did not tell anybody. But you have to understand: since your deal does not offer me anything, how can I accept it? You are a businessman, you can understand I am just trying to use that knowledge to my advantage. I simply cannot miss that opportunity!"

I could see he was amazed. "Listen, I like your way of thinking," he admitted. "It is very original. If you want you can be our agent."

"Like Calhoun?" I snapped. "How did you ever get hold of that character? Oh, I forgot, he also signed the contract, right?"

He did not answer, but he really did not have to. The answer was obvious, but I could see, that he was offended. Trying to put the things straight, I started to negotiate again: "But now, when I know that I will live seven more years, I would really like to sign your agreement. Of course, only if you give me few more years on the top," I added quickly.

"Really," he said, "you do have a style. Do you know what? I will talk about it with Lord Creator."

"Please do. By the way, he really wants to be called Creator?"

"Oh, no, we just address him that way. He does not like any titles, this is the only one he can stand. Since he created this world, he locked himself in some kind of seclusion and he lives now only to his hobby. It's called cybernetics or *devil* knows what." He stopped abruptly, realizing that he took his own name in vain and explained with the apologetic smile: "The force of habit, you know. In order to keep the world together, he employs us - and the angels, of course. And we have to do all this work now." He shook his head: "Very hard work, Sir! You wouldn't believe how difficult it is; to keep the world in balance, to maintain the things the way they are supposed to be!"

And before I could ask him which way the things supposed to be, he disappeared, not even bothering to use the door.

It was the very next day, when I received the phone call. The man introduced himself as

one *Martin Leblanc*. "Sorry," I answered, "you are surely mistaken, that is my name, not yours."

"But it is," he objected, "I am your guardian angel, so it is my name too. You see, we keep the names of people we guard."

"Very practical," I said, "so you are my alter ego, second ego," I added, just in case the angels don't understand Latin.

"No, no," he objected again, "not the second and definitely not ego, my son."

"O.K.," I said, "so you are my guardian angel." The situation was becoming so bizarre that nothing could surprise me any more. "I agree, but could you stop calling me your son? I know whose son I am, by the way. Now come to the point."

"Well," he said with hesitation, "I've heard that you want to make a deal with devil."

"The grapevine really grows all the way to heaven," I observed, but he obviously did not understand. "So what, is that any business of yours? Are you a guardian angel or a secret policeman? What do you care? You were not there to help me when I had that car accident either!"

I could hear from his voice he was offended. "It was me," he said, "who softened the impact with that truck!"

"But not enough," I fumed, "I had to spend several weeks in a hospital and then I had to pay more for my car insurance. What do you want from me now?"

"Don't do it, Martin," he begged me, "you will be sorry for the rest of your life!"

"Only for seven years," I laughed, "or maybe even more, if I am lucky."

"But you will lose your life eternal," he insisted.

"What eternal life? And I have to die first to live forever? What if you are just bluffing and there is no *'forever'*? Besides, eternal life must be an eternal bore. Tell me, is it true that I have only seven years to live?"

"You see," he started to explain, "that is the whole problem. Imagine that everybody will think that way. People would ask when is their term coming, they would want miracles, some of them even body transplants or at least deep freeze. The rich one, of course,

would like to be resurrected and God knows what - " He stopped abruptly and I could hear him whispering: "Pardon me Lord, I did not mean it that way!"

"Look," I said, "that is all entirely your problem. You guys made a mistake and I have found it out. But I give you one advice: tell it to your boss and you can forget the whole thing."

"You want me to tell it to archangel Gabriel himself?"

"No, silly," I retorted, "I mean the Lord Creator himself and that's it." I hung up the phone with utmost satisfaction. I could be proud on myself: the interview with God was now guaranteed from two sources.

I waited whole week, but Creator did not come. Well, I thought, the times when gods were walking this earth are obviously gone. Let's forget the whole thing.

Instead, I have received by mail an invitation or shall we say the warning, to come and dutifully receive my obligatory shot against flu. I called the number and tried to convince the lady there that I did not need any inoculation, since I had another seven years and after that I wouldn't not need it any more.

"We are not interested," the lady exclaimed, "how long you will live, Sir. This is a governmental program and that is an order. Do not make it too difficult for me, please. Shots are given on Fridays and you have to come personally," she explained, apparently in attempt to discourage me from coming any other way.

But I haven't received the shot after all. On my way to their office, actually right on the stairs to subway, somebody pushed me and I felt down. When I recovered, I was in the hospital, covered all over by white bandages and plaster. Several strange tubes were sticking out of my body, connected to some gadget located above my head.

Old man, apparently the doctor or maybe professor, was standing by my bed and was telling the group of medical students I would be lucky if I survive the weekend.

"No, no," I tried to explain, " I will live for another seven years!"

He looked at me rather surprised and then uttered, ironically: "This is not your decision to make!" he then turned to his students and said: "Here you can see what happens when the patient is trying to write his own diagnosis! So - according to them - there is no need for us, doctors!" he laughed at his own joke and his students obliged him with giggles.

When leaving the room, the professor turned back to me and announced: "Mr. Leblanc, you have a visitor, but only few minutes, O.K.? You know you mustn't strain yourself!"

Aha, the lady from the health office, I thought, so I will get that shot after all. But I was wrong: who entered, was the Creator himself. You may wonder how I recognized him, but believe me, when it happens, you know.

"My boy," he said and I had no objection, since he had a right to do so, being of course much older than I was and my Creator too, for that matter. "My boy," he repeated, "you are causing us some serious problems." He said '*us*' and I wondered, if he meant somebody else or if it was just '*royal plural*'.

"I know," I admitted, "but I really cannot make my mind."

"Oh no," he smiled, "I mean you falling down the stairs and forcing me to do everything in my power to keep you alive."

"Just because I still have those seven years to go, right?"

"Nonsense," he laughed, "if I can give you a life, I can surely take it away. That, my boy, is so easy, that even you mortals can do it."

"But how about the tale about everybody having his time calculated in advance?" I asked.

"Well," he avoided the direct answer, "he does and he doesn't. But I surely liked your discovery that the devil is bluffing. Where did you learn that?"

"I didn't," I said proudly, "I just figured it out myself." Then, not to look too modest, I added: "I read a lot. I also studied the formal logic, theory of information and artificial intelligence."

"Interesting," he nodded, "and how about that - whatchamacalit - yes, how about the *cybernetics*?"

"Affirmative, but we call it by many other names, nowadays."

"Well," he said, rather confused and returned back to his original train of thoughts. "You know, my boy, the life is like a book - it doesn't matter how many pages it has, all that matters how good it is."

"Agreed," I said, "you are quoting the Greek philosopher Zenon, but he was defending the suicide. And as you probably know, I do not want to die. We all came to this world as silly, screaming little babies and when we learn something, we have to go again. I tell you, if there is no life after death, then this life is just a stupid joke somebody is playing on us." Oh God - I thought - what am I saying?

He was not offended. Instead, he said: "Call me father - after all, I created all there is. And to your point: I have to admit that it is a very interesting opinion; it never crossed my mind that somebody would think about it that way... But listen, what do you want is rather unimportant here. Do you think that I can do what I want? Surely - I could, but I won't. I simply cannot afford it - there are also laws of nature and besides, it all depends on circumstances. If I want to change something, I have to study the situation first and make my mind later. And then comes somebody like you, says he doesn't want to die and bothers me with the questions about the sense of life. If you want one, if you need one, you have to find it for yourself, my son. You can collect stamps or girls, what do I care, but please do it all right, do it sincerely."

Then his face looked friendly again - my face probably looked like the one of a little boy reprimanded by his teacher. "So you do not want to die," he repeated.

"Oh, no, don't get me wrong," I lied, "I just do not want to die so early."

"And when," he asked ironically, "when in your opinion is *'not early'*? After ten, hundred, thousand years?" He certainly knew how to make me feel stupid. "Well," he said and it sounded like an apology, "I am sorry, that was a cheap shot. But seriously, when do you want to die?"

"I do not know," I admitted, "all I know is that I don't want to decide it now. Why do I have to make a decision, if I do not need to make one?"

"But Martin, there are moments in human life, when you have to make a decision, even important decision, say about life or death."

"I know," I agreed, "but I don't want to start counting the remaining days, I simply do not want to know when I am supposed to die. Especially now, when you confirmed, that I have more than those seven years -" I deliberately did not finish the sentence, hoping to learn something, but I couldn't trick him.

"I didn't say anything of that sort," he snapped. "But it is O.K.," he added, "you have already made your decision."

"I did?"

"Sure," he confirmed, "you decided that you do not want to decide."

"I can do that?" I asked, surprised.

"But of course," he laughed, "you people can do anything, even the mistakes. You see, that is a big difference. Being God, I cannot afford to make any mistakes."

Now it was my turn to laugh. He shook his finger towards me: "Do not criticize, if you do not know why I did it!"

"Now then," he continued, "can you repeat for me exactly what do you want?"

"Sure," I was happy the things started to move. "I want to die without knowing when it happens."

"Granted," he agreed, "what else?"

"I want to die quickly -" and since he was not interrupting, I quickly added: "and without pain..."

He lost his patience: "Nobody wants to die in pain, Martin, nevertheless most of you do. And as that was not enough, you people had to invent wars and tortures... never mind. But what am I to tell the others?"

Then, suddenly, he exclaimed: "Heureka, I've got it!" His face was suddenly lit with a glorious, friendly smile. And I felt that all my troubles were gone and I was not afraid any more. I was feeling extremely happy - like a child opening his Christmas gifts...

Then something disturbed me. It was not some special noise, more like the absence of it. Then I realized: the electronic monitor by my bedside stopped its periodical beeps and I could see long uninterrupted green line on its screen.

"That's nothing," said Creator, "just a temporary failure." And from then on we were talking only cybernetics...

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CORNER

come live with me and be my love
yellow sunlight oozes in my room
let new tears come to your eye
by the light of the moon
facing a fate you cannot change
and overwhelming gestures
seem strangely out of context
don't hesitate to choose a tiny corner
in the most difficult moments of your existence

THE SPIDER MAN

You ask me for the sports section
and only stay to see what happens next
you need some sleep, you fool
you have lost contact
with your past
and future
and present
end

TO SHOW YOU'RE NOT AFRAID

Shortly before dinner
some shredded bits of paper in the wind
your eyes
just try to read the words
to show that you are not afraid
until you understand it
talk about freedom
then even pain is beautiful

[Back to index \(Zpátky na index\)](#)

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HURONTARIA - 6A/98



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[Back to Title Page \(Jdi na titulní stránku\)](#)

Commentary:

As you probably noticed, we added the Alphabetical Index to our Title page and we will continue to update it. Now after the second mirror we got the third one in Germany, for our European readers. All you have to do is to find the fastest mirror for you on the Title Page and put it in your bookmarks.

We are growing fast, judging by the number of our readers and links. You can read about it if you subscribe to our regular bulletin announcing the appearance of the new issues of Hurontaria. Just drop us a mail with the word SUBSCRIBE. We are also trying to reach the readers, who want to improve their knowledge of Czech or English languages via interesting reading. We are helped in this task by links posted by tourist agencies, colleges and universities. If you promote us there and anywhere else, you can do us a big favour and we will be grateful.

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Short Story: CAPTAIN NEMO

Inclinations: CANADIAN LIMERICKS

Note: Part B is in Czech, and the content is different. For Part B, please go back to Title Page.



"Life is for living and the gift is for forgiving"

Pls send me a mail to my address below; your comments will be appreciated. If you want to receive announcement of the new issue by mail, add the word SUBSCRIBE. We would also appreciate if you let us know where did you learn about Hurontaria.

Webmaster Jan(Honza) ©hurychj@hurontel.on.ca

Text follows:

OTHER DIMENSIONS: INTERVIEW WITH Dr. PICKOVER
(First printed in AmberZine, Prague)

Dr. Pickover is the author of many popular books such as Time (A Traveler's Guide), Spider Legs (Science Fiction), The Loom of God (On the relationship between mathematics, God, physics, and religion), The Alien IQ Test, Fractal Horizons - The Future Use of Fractals (A book describing how fractals will be used in the 21st century), Keys to Infinity (On the mystery and beauty of infinity and large numbers), Visualizing Biological Information (How can we use computer graphics to find meaning in DNA), Strange things are born in the ocean's depth (Just Published!) and several more.

He is also the author of about two hunders articles, he owns the patent for three-dimensional mouse (a computer mouse, in the case you wondered) and he worked on many other interesting things. In the present time, he works for IBM research.

He writes stories for Discoverer, articles for Wired, Washington Post and Scientific American. You can often see him on TV (CNN and Discovery channel). His interests go from Taichi to Kung-fu, from tropical forests to piano playing (jazz that is). It's impossible to describe him in any simple way: he is a futurologist, mathematician, physicist and artist. Let me put it another way: nothing human is too remote for him.

Note: I have made an e-mail interview with him after reading one of his books and seeing his interesting WEB page. Contrary to my worries, he was more then willing to participate and answer my questions. This is a reprint of that interview. Jan)

From: Hurych, Jan
Sent: June 6, 1997 10:32 AM
To: CLIFF@watson.ibm.com
Subject: AmberZine Query

Dear Mr. Pickover,
(after introduction:)

1) In your WEB page "Wishing Project", you are gathering the information about people's wishes. Could you tell us what is your observation so far: are our wishes limited by the material world or by our imagination only? And what would you advise me if I ask for something I know I cannot get?

2) In your wonderfull book „Keys to Infinity", you deal with "numbers too large to compute or even to imagine". I have invented the following paradox: for circular motion, the centrifugal force is proportional to the square of the radius. The larger the radius, the larger the force. For infinite radius, there will be infinite force. Does that mean that I would encounter the highest centrifugal force when I am driving on the infinite radius - therefore on straight line – provided that I can keep angular speed constant (which I surely cannot, but let's say I could)?

Regards,

Jan Hurych,
Amberzine

From: CLIFF@watson.ibm.com[SMTP:CLIFF@watson.ibm.com]

Sent: June 6, 1997 10:32 AM

To: Hurych, Jan

Subject: AmberZine Query

Ref: Your note of Fri, 6 Jun 1997 10:06:44 -0400

Jan, thanks for your nice words and questions. Since I spent so much time on the first question, I hope this single question and answer is sufficient.

Regards, Cliff

<http://sprott.physics.wisc.edu/pickover/home.htm>

1) In your WEB page "Wishing Project", you are gathering the information about people's wishes. Could you tell us what is your observation so far: are our wishes limited by the material world or by our imagination only? And what would you advise me if I ask for something I know I cannot get?

In my web page at <http://sprott.physics.wisc.edu/pickover/home.htm> I continue to

conduct an informal international study of human desire in which people on our planet, ages 9 to 90, describe in their own words their most intimate wishes and dreams. What do people wish for today?

Since ancient days, people consulted priests, shamans, or other wise men for dream interpretation and wish-fulfilment. More recently, people consult mediums, crystals, UFOs, and an amazing array of New Age paraphernalia. It seems humans have always wished for material possessions and spiritual powers. What is the significance of our specific wishes? How do our wishes change with age? How do they vary with gender and culture?

I think of "wishing" as part of a whole cultural picture; people's wishes mirror their feelings and position in the rest of society. My experience reading and listening to people's wishes has made me realize that wishes are not casual but rather are rooted in the wisher's present life and concerns. In fact, it seems that wishes often replay people's lives in depth, dredging dreams that are almost subconscious until written down. As you'll see from reading the wishes in this book, a wish can give both literal information and also symbolic information revealing a person's inner world with all its conflicts.

In more repressed times, the simple act of wishing was the greatest of sins, punishable by everlasting fire in the afterlife or by cruel Inquisition-like punishments in this life. My greatest hope is that this book may play a part in helping the next generation grow up in a world where more wishes come true, where the expression of desire is not a discourageable act but rather viewed as a creative tool and emotional outlet. Since wishes are a barometer of the human condition, our society should devise more open ways of talking about desires that will be positive and constructive.

I solicited people's wishes on the Internet in an attempt to discover what humans long for as the millennium comes to a close. Obviously, since Internet access is more prevalent among the wealthier and more educated people and countries, this survey underrepresents vast divisions of society. In addition, some cultures (particularly Americans) are more open to expressing their inner desires than, let us say, Oriental cultures. As a result of this sampling bias, critics will probably label this book "the wishes of techno-elite Westerners"; nevertheless, wishes came from a wide array of occupations, ages, and areas. A majority of wishers are from the United States with most of the U.S. States represented. Wishes also came from respondents located in countries including: Brazil, Malaysia, India, Sweden, Guatemala, Australia, Canada, Israel, New Zealand, Singapore, and the United Kingdom.

Respondents were aged from 9 to 90, with about 55% being men, 45% women. Occupations included: actors, administrators, advertisers, army photographers, artists,

art directors, bank workers, billboard painters, child care workers, clothing business entrepreneurs, computer and electronics specialists, costumers, counselors, dog trainers, engineers, family mediators, housewives, game designers, kennel owners, legal professionals, lunch ladies, letter carriers, librarians, managers, marketers, microscope service engineers, medical professionals, martial artists, military professionals, musicians, office mangers, publishers, preschool owners, psychologists, sales people, seamstresses, school administrators, secretaries, security experts; college, high-school, and graduate students; teachers and professors, webmistresses, and writers.

Peoples' wishes fell into about 20 categories. The top 5 categories were:

PEOPLE -

these wishes include the desire to talk to or be with certain people not available due to death or various separations, the happiness of other people, helping other people, hoping other people would use their brains, changes in the attitudes of others, elimination of deafness and disabilities, meeting famous people (Tori Amos, Peter Gabriel, Robin Williams, Carl Sagan), desire for famous people to return to life to help the world, punishment of other people, well-being of world's children, people smiling, teaching people lessons of life, better communications between people, improving other people's understanding, desire for the death of drug users or firearm users, end of human suffering, abolition of racism, return of a lost love, education of children around the world, knowing what others think of oneself.

MONEY/MATERIAL -

these wishes include the desire for wealth for personal use, material possessions, and freedom from debt. The category also includes wishes for money or materials (e.g. cars or computers) that are given to others.

SKILLS/POWERS -

this category includes desires for various abilities. Chess, communication skills, photographic memories, superpowers, invisibility, telekenesis, power to heal, mind-reading, mind- influencing, omnipotence, flying, running, athletic skills, musical skills, programming skills, painting, photographic memory, creativity, pilot's license, returning to college, teleportation; the desire to feel colors, hear shapes, taste sounds; the desire to be a better teacher, living at the edge of one's capabilities, better memory, talents, language acquisition....

FAMILY -

these wishes are similar to those in the "People" category but are more oriented to family members. They include topics such as: happiness of one's children, not taking partners for granted, happiness and safety of daughters, closer relationship with a

spouse, wishes that parents stop fighting, reuniting parents, health of children, preventing self-destruction of family members (alcoholism, anorexia, high-risk behavior), well-being of parents and grandparents, finding missing relatives, wishing for a baby, wishing that family members are still alive, wishes for changes in spouse's attitudes....

PEACE -

these wishes cover such topics as: ending violence, peace on a personal or global scale, peace of mind, end of fighting with spouse or fiancée, the destruction of nuclear weaponry, and ending violence against women.

Before starting this study, I had thought that most people would wish for the impossible, such as immortality or the power to move objects with their mind, but to my surprise the overwhelming majority of wishes fell into achievable and possible goals. (Examples of "possible" wishes include finding a mate, gaining money or fame, or having safe abortions available to the world.)

Here are some other observations. The wishes of female respondent's more often dealt with family than did men's wishes. Men were more interested in wishes dealing with the intellect and knowledge than women. People younger than 40 were more concerned with jobs, spiritual matters, and desire for power and knowledge, than people older than 40. Women were more interested in pets and animals than men.

Many of us are too shy to express our wishes. So be it. Let's not grow hardened to our own secret wishes. When possible, telling others our wishes provides a clarity and catharsis. Knowing and expressing dreams and wishes is first step to realizing them. Your wishes are your muses, your sources of inspiration. In some cases, they can save marriages when feelings are otherwise not adequately expressed. If children and adults are too afraid to tell others their wishes, whole populations can suffer. In his famous "I Have a Dream" speech, in 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. moved an entire nation to aspire to his vision of freedom and equality for all.

You asked me, "And what would you advise me if I ask for something I know I cannot get?" Continue to seek ways for making at least part of the wish come true, or if truly impossible, modify yourself so that you can find pleasure in the simple things in life. As Pascal once said, "The sole cause of man's unhappiness is that he does not know how to stay quietly in his own room."

Please let your readers give me advice for seeking a publisher of THE BOOK OF WISHES in which I present the entire catalog of wishes. Please also have them visit my home page at <http://sprott.physics.wisc.edu/pickover/home.htm> to learn more about my

latest published books including THE LOOM OF GOD (published by Plenum) and THE ALIEN IQ TEST (published by Basic Books).

Regards, Cliff

(*Note:* While Cliff didn't answer my second question, I do have my own answer - anybody wants to discuss it? Jan)

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LIFE: LIFE IS LIKE A BOWL OF CHERRIES.

I guess you all know that famous saying, to which I used to add: "...but THEY have a ball and WE have just pitts." Don't get me wrong, I am not complaining here about social inequalities, I am just trying to point out to another discrimination, the one administered by Lady Luck herself.

How come that some people are so darn lucky? Wherever they go and whatever they do, they are fortunate, gifted, even blessed with luck. They don't need to move a finger and they win in a lottery, find a motherload of gold on their backyard or their rich uncle dies and they inherit his millions. Now tell me: when was the last time you had a rich uncle? Well, neither had I. Oh yes, I have an uncle all right, but when he dies, all I inherit is a pile of his debts.

Of course, there is one thing I can do - I can complain. Unfortunately, there is no institution I can complain to, so I am doing it here. I know I can find a sympathetic soul among you, because believe it or not, there is many of us and if you are like me, we may even share our bad experiences. Let's show the world that Lady Luck is actually no lady at all.

It happened that I once was not only out of luck but I was also publicly humiliated because of my misfortune. It happened on Christmas dinner for CSA (Canadian Standards Association) employees. The place was one of those expensive hotels near Toronto International Airport. The evening started with a prayer which was followed by a dinner and then by dance. And of course, before the dance started, there were giving away the door prizes. Five numbers were drawn, mine being the fourth in line.

Each selected winner stepped up on the platform and then he or she had to pick the paper from the hat held by a beautiful girl. The paper was of course folded, so however much I was trying to peek in, my guess would be as good as yours. First guy won a set

of fancy dishes, the next "drafter" was a lady, who won a camcorder, the third person got something else again and then it was my turn. My shaking hand pulled the fatal paper out of the hat and I won very colorful and large - *ashtray*. The last person, another lady, pulled out the remaining paper and won - a color TV set.

After that, we shook hands with organizers and thanked them profoundly. Especially me, who was thanking them over and over again, hoping, that it was just a joke and they eventually might exchange it for something little more valuable, probably a small car or two weeks vacation in Venice, Italy. To add insult to injury, I had no use for an ashtray at all since I already quit smoking. The worst was still waiting: when I returned to my seat, my wife was welcoming me with a very pleasant smile, which was so easy to decode. Finally, she said: "What a colorfull ashtray!" Not more, not less, but the reference to color TV that I didn't pick was more than obvious.

Now let me also tell you another story, this time about a girl, who lived in Paris, where she waited for her Canadian immigration visa. Being rather short of money, she once went to horse races and placed a bet. A single bet, because that was all she could afford. Being no expert in horses, she picked one by number only. Number 13, to be accurate, because she was born on 13th of July. Then she left the booth with the ticket in her hand, but few minutes later she looked at it and suddenly realized she got number 15 instead. So she run back like crazy, had to wait again and after some begging she happily exchanged her number 15 back to 13. Needless to say, the horse number 15 won the race and the winner took twenty to one.

There is a happy ending to that story. I married that girl and for thirty years now we are sharing the best moments of our lifes. Well, minus and minus does not give us any plus, but we don't mind. In Czech language, there is only one word meaning both *happy* and *lucky*. It has its own logic: if you are *lucky*, you should be *happy* about it and if you are *happy*, you should consider yourself *lucky* person. And we made another discovery: you don't even need to be *lucky* to be *happy*, you know.

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SHORT STORY: CAPTAIN NEMO

He wasn't the underwater hero of Verne's book and there was no mystery around him, at least not when I gave him that nickname. It is my habit, as you may not know, to name the people around me. I have two good reasons for it: first, it will get them a touch of familiarity and secondly I keep forgetting their real names. The problem is that I use those "given" names quite freely in public and it sometimes gets me in serious trouble.

Like the one caused by rather fitting name "R2D2" (from Star Wars), which I assigned to one of my colleagues at work, rather short and funny looking fellow. People liked it and it eventually reached his ears, but he was not too happy about it, as you can imagine.

Nothing like that could of course happen to my captain Nemo, simply because I never revealed it to anybody, for reasons that I still don't quite understand. It was probably chosen more like a joke and only later I have realized that the joke was on me.

I've first met him on the cliff high above the Inverhill Bay, the place I used to walk my dog Tara. This solitary cliff - the next one is too far for a walk - is a fascinating place. For me, that is. You can go there and watch the lake, it's color, the clouds and waves. It is all part of it's appearance, its mood, which is changing daily. With its huge size, Huron Lake is even larger than some small seas and its storms can be very bad indeed. We have at least three shipwrecks here to prove it and if that's not enough, go and see Tobermory, the graveyard of thirty ships or more.

Next to cliff's edge there is an old *coach road* which runs all the way from Sarnia up to Bruce peninsula, some two hundred miles. Most of it does not exist any more, but the section here is still preserved, partly because it was shielded by surrounding cedar forests, partly because it somehow escaped the claws of progress.

For a long time, it was just me and Tara, who enjoyed the romantic setting of the place. And not just enjoyed: I used to go there and do some painting, in acrylic of course. As I already mentioned, the panorama is beautiful and if you cannot paint a sea, this place is next best. Not that I am too much of a painter, but the process of creation is so rewarding that the results alone are really not that important. So I enjoyed my little seclusion and made my *rondes-vous* with Huron rather regular. And nothing was bothering us until one day we realized that we weren't there alone any more.

It was of course Tara who noticed him first, since I was usually too deep in my endeavours. Due to my limitations, most of my efforts were directed towards the painting skill and talent, probably because I had neither. So I sometimes talked to my picture and what's worse, even to myself. When Tara started to bark, I told her to be quiet or something in that sense, but when she didn't stop I turned around and there he was. Big fellow, slightly bent and leaning on his cane - or maybe walking stick - was standing at a distance. He watched the lake with rather investigating look, not bothering to turn his head in spite of Tara's insistence. That was rather peculiar - not his indifference, but the fact that Tara even bothered to bark. She usually does not bark, not even at strangers.

I was too busy to catch those elusive clouds on my canvas, so I did not realize that the man was approaching. Surprisingly, my dog stopped barking and I looked up again. As he was standing a few paces away, he said 'Hello' and without bothering to look at my picture, which was also unusual on its own, he simply said: "It is going to rain in half an hour, I guess." Then he took off and disappeared back on the road. I did not pay too much attention to it - the light was fading and I wanted to catch most of it before it was gone. Yet the first drops of rain soon hit us with mother nature's perseverance and so I put a cover over my painting, wrapped it around and home we went.

Next day, the man came again and as much as he was a nuisance to me so was I probably to him as well. A few days later, when he realized I would not give up my right to the place, he approached me and started to talk. Small talk, nothing worth mentioning, nevertheless we have got acquainted and after a period of mild toleration, we actually got used to each other. I believe that he deliberately set his visit on cliff so it would coincide with mine and when he skipped a day or so, I sort of missed him too. Every day, after he spent a few minutes watching the lake, he came to us and we talked. He also noticed my picture and had some comments - I should say rather pertinent comments, mostly about my colors. He obviously knew the lake well and while I sometimes didn't like his advice, I usually followed them, because they were mostly correct anyway. That says quite a lot about his observation talent, considering that he never really painted anything, at least that's what he said to me.

There was something about his face, which reminded me of the mysterious captain Nemo and not knowing any better, I gave him that nickname. Childish, yes, but come to think of it, it sounded better than Captain Nobody, which - meaning the same - could be rather offensive. His hair was covered by the cap, which is usually called "greek" and sometimes "immigrant" cap. While the hair was still black enough, his beard was cut in the style of general Beauregard and was grey all over. Then there were his eyes: deep in their sockets and squinting like Robert Mitchum's, with a kind of a sharp look - but not strict, if you know what I mean.

Pretty soon he and Tara became good friends. He brought her biscuits, patted her on the head and that was something she didn't allow anybody except me and my wife Ingrid. They say animals can recognize a good person, but judging from my experience, you can buy their love by a few biscuits any time. I think that's what they apparently consider "good", anyway. After a while, I have got used to him, too, so much that I even told him about the nickname I had picked for him. A hint, I explained, because he looked like a man who spent most of his life on various ships. He laughed and confirmed that I was right. And the name probably fits too, he added.

He used to come there at regular time and before he left, he always checked the time on

his golden watch, probably a gift. As we talked more and more, we could not help telling each other some details about ourselves, about our lives and interests. He used to work aboard those large ships on Great Lakes. Ships carrying grain, coal, ore, stone or anything else, where it was cheaper to move it by ship instead of train. Of course, the time of old schooners sailing the lakes is long time gone. Big bulk freighters or ocean ships, which have by the way access to Great Lakes as well, are now staffed with mechanics and electricians rather than sailors. The life on freighters and cargo vessels is rather boring and some chaps may even go restless and quit. Others usually want to have a regular family life and sooner or later leave too. That's why he did, I believe. He didn't explicitly said so, but it was evident from his comments.

Some time later, he opened a fish restaurant, hoping that the little cooking skill he learned on ships will attract customers. You can still find one of that kind in Williston, it's called *Captain Slim's*. Inevitably, the bussines was bad and after he used up most of his savings, he soon closed it. Back to ships he went again and after some time, he saved little bit of money and with rather substantial loan he bought a fishing boat.

"Rosemary", as he christened it, was actually a fish tug and looked more like a submarine, half surfaced half sunk. Of course, the beauty she was not. However, that was all he needed for catching smelt, herring, trout and what-nots. He sold the fish he caught to different restaurants and supermarkets. He also built a little shack on his backyard which he turned into a smokehouse. His smoked salmon and whitefish were considered by most people the best you could buy, at least around Huron shores. The fishing provided enough money for the whole family and so he could sell the boat and move here, to Inverhill, to retire and rest. His wife died some time ago and his son - well, he is in Michigan.

He ended his story at that. If there was something else, he surely did not volunteer to tell me and I didn't ask either. And so we carried on, me with my recreational painting and no hope for improvement and he with his regular visits on cliff and familiar staring at the lake. Surely, I thought, he missed his days on big ships and his fishing trips probably too, but did he really want it back so badly that he had to dream about it every day? Then, I made a mistake. I mentioned my doubts about it to Ingrid. As soon as I said it I was sorry already, but some things you just cannot turn back, no Sir. She asked about his name and I told her. Little did I know that she would search the records in the public library for information about him. She even found one lady from Bruceville, who remembered his name. Her story confirmed what he already told me but there was also one incident he did not mention to me.

While fishing business was doing better, pretty soon he needed some help, too. So he brought his son Roy on the tug to help him and all went well until the kid grew up. Roy simply got some other plans, like going to college and eventually get married. "Sure,"

said his father, " just stay one more season, we have to make enough money before you can go." He repeated the same promise for three years, until his son really had enough and decided to leave anyway. Maybe not for school but surely far away from that smelling, fishy bussines he didn't like anyway. "O.K., I stay till the end of *this* season and I'd be gone then," he told his father, who realized he cannot fool him any more.

It happened during those few last days Roy promised to stay on Rosemary. When fall approaches, Huron becomes quite windy and can be really treacherous. Even skilled fishermen try to stay in familiar water and close to shore, because lake is rather shallow in some places and rocky as well. No wonder that some of ancient lighthouses are still operating, in order to guide ships safely to the haven.

Well, captain Nemo did not always follow that rule, especially when tracing some big school of fish by his radar. Nevertheless, as I already said, he knew his lake well a he always got away with it.

Then it happened: they were caught in one very bad storm. They were both fighting their way back home - and people said that he was probably drunk, too - when his son fell overboard. Huge waves hammered the tug which was moving round and round like a hopeless bucket. Roy's father circled the place many times, he even stayed there all night and the next day. When the storm subsided, there were no traces of his son. The body was never found - the boy simply vanished. How or by whose mistake it happened was never really established, but the investigators were satisfied it was an accident.

So much for the story. His wife died soon afterwards, probably due to loss of their son, their only child. Sure, one has to separate the facts from rumors, but there it was and it partly explained to me his peculiar behaviour. I could understand his watchfull observation of Huron waters, day after day, week after week. His eyes were always turned west, toward the place where it apparently happened. I even believed he could have had a fixed idea that one day his son might return back to him. I guess that's why he sold his bussines and moved here. Surely it was a most probable reason for his daily vigil on the cliff.

As I said, I never asked, never pressed him for details, even after I knew the rest of the story. After all, we all have some skeleton in our closet, his was just at the bottom of the lake. It was not my bussines and may he rest in peace, Amen.

After some time I noticed he would like to tell me something. I believe now - but did not grasp it then - that he probably wanted to relieve his troubled mind or even to share his ghastly feelings with me. My lack of curiosity - or shall I say my ignorance - was possibly the only reason I did not provide any encouragement for him. I guess he didn't

dare to bother me with his confession without me asking him. I know better now. I even felt sorry about it. But then again: not for long, I am not that kind of man.

Then in September, he did not show up for two weeks. I missed him a lot, he surely came as close as one could to become my friend. I figured he was probably sick or something, when he showed up again. Tara was greeting him as usual and I could not help asking him, what kept him at home. " Oh no, I was not at home," he said, "I went back to Bruceville and bought me back my fishing boat."

"Again? Cannot give up fishing, eh? Or is it something else?" It just slipped from my mouth and I was immediately sorry I said that. He looked at me and I knew he suddenly realized I knew.

"Yes," he confirmed, " there is something else."

Still, I did not ask yet. One does not do such things, not until the other person decide it for himself.

"Ehm, " I said and pretended I have some problem with my painting. I was thinking what could I possibly tell him, but just could not figure out what should it be.

"Are you a religious man?" he suddenly asked.

"Not that I know about it," I laughed. " But I go to church regularly, if that's what you mean."

"No, that is not what I mean," he replied, "and you know it. Do you believe that we shall be forgiven all bad things we ever did?"

"You are serious, are you?" I pretended that I suddenly grasped his hint. " I suppose I am the wrong person to ask. We have priests for that but I doubt if they really know themselves," I replied and laughed.

"But what is your opinion - that is if you want to tell me. That's what I would like to know," he insisted.

"An honest answer?" I asked.

"Yes, honest answer," he confirmed.

There is the time in man's life he should tell the truth - I mean when he must tell the

truth or bear the consequences. The trouble is that when that moment comes, we may not realize it.

" I honestly think that we don't need to ask for forgiveness. To cry before something happens is too early and to cry afterwards is too late," I recited my famous line without thinking how much cruelty it actually contained for him. Why did I say that, I really didn't know. What I actually wanted to tell him was quite different. I meant that he should not feel guilty any more, that the things simply happen and if we don't mean any harm, there is nothing to forgive.

Suddenly, he withdrew back to his shell. "That was all I wanted to know. Yes, it's too late now," he said. We exchanged few more sentences but he never touched the subject again. I tried to keep the conversation on, but he obviously didn't feel like it. That evening he left earlier, bidding me good night. He never showed up on the cliff again and after few days I learned he left Inverhill. It was obvious that I saw the last of him.

When I told Ingrid, she was quite mad at me. "You fool," she cried, "you certainly know how to hurt a man!" I don't like being criticized, but in that case I knew she was right. It bothered me, too. My cliff visits were still regular only shorter, as the sun was setting earlier. Of course, it could have been also due to the fact that we were there again alone, me and Tara. She probably missed him too, but I was also bothered with the feeling of guilt, something I do not feel very often.

It is the known fact that people hurt others mostly because of stupidity. Your friends and even loved ones can do you real harm and still think it is for your best. No stranger would hurt you without some good reason, unless of course he is crazy. But people you consider dear to you can put you in terrible pain without even knowing it. How come we can be harmed most by the people we love most? Could it be that we feel it like a betrayal, like a misuse of our affection? Or is it simply because we never expected it from them first place?

It bothered me a while, but as I said, I never feel guilty for long. Instead, I imagined captain Nemo on his tug, searching the waves of lake Huron for his son. Or maybe just looking for forgiveness in places where you find it least. After all, the waters of our lake claimed quite a number of victims and they still do. How can he expect them to have mercy on his soul?

Maybe it was Ingrid who told me to write him a letter to explain my stupid behaviour and to apologize. Soon I realized it was impossible to find his new address. I tried

desperately in Bruceville and many other places, but there was really no hope. One day, partly as a jest and partly for reasons unknown, I put that letter in the empty bottle and threw it from the cliff. The waves embraced it and then released it again and it went, bouncing up and down on the restless waters of Huron Lake. Silly, I thought, how easy could be to dispose of your mistakes, to beg forgiveness and to get it, too.

Soon I have forgotten about him, especially when my visits on cliff were becoming irregular. Fall weather is unpredictable on Huron and captains from ocean freighters who reach Great Lakes via St. Lawrence waterway are comparing bad storms on Huron to those in North Atlantic.

It was then when somebody brought us the news about captain Nemo. He moved to the other side of the lake, somewhere in Michigan, he brought his boat there and spent his time mostly aboard. Last news were that he disappeared in one of those storms. Coast guard cutters were searching for him for few days and then they gave up.

So he finally found his son after all, I thought. Maybe it was for the best and maybe I could not persuade him otherwise, anyway. You can see I wasn't through with it yet and I had to keep convincing myself I was not guilty. Feeling guilt is a bad thing. It can eat you alive, it can turn man into a ghost. When you start feeling sorry, there is no end of it and it does not matter if you are actually guilty or not. It's the feelings that counts, not the facts. He could not live with it so he did what he did. He could not forgive himself, that's all. But could he still forgive me?

I thought I'd never find the answer to my last question, but I did. September passed and it was in the middle of October, when I went with Tara to our cliff again. I stood there, at the place he used to stand and turned my head west as he used to do. Suddenly, I spotted something black in the water. I walked down to the shore and before I knew it, Tara jumped in the water and fished out the wet "greek" cap.

Frankly, I don't believe in coincidences, but in this case I am willing to make an exception. After all, even my wife Ingrid believes that it was captain's hat and that his ghost finally finding forgiveness, wanted to tell me he can forgive me too. It surely makes me feel much better.

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MONKIE DO.

There was an abstinent monk,
who never was seen to be drunk.
Whole year he was sober,
except for October,
when he drunk and then sunk in his bunk.

LAWS OF PHYSICS

Physicist from old Nipissing,
religion was strictly dismissing,
to devil went his soul,
his body in black hole,
so he shrunk, but he wasn't missing.

NO DEAL.

Old Charlie who couldn't heal,
promised God he wouldn't steal.
But when he recovered,
he quickly discovered:
I'm no more sick - there goes the deal!

OLD JIM.

On his property Jimmy took hold
and he suddenly discovered gold.
He said: All that treasure
would not give me pleasure,
'cause for all pleasures I'm too old.

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HURONTARIA - 7A/98



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Commentary:

Do you enjoy sending those "digital" postcards? Then you must be tired with their choices and complicated menu when you have to program everything, including the color of their background. After long deliberation - and we may even say "thinking" - our editor finally came with very original solution: one, completely universal postcard. You don't need to bother any more to figure out if your addressee is Mr., Mrs., Miss. or even Ms., actually you don't need to bother with anything any more. Well, it was not entirely his invention: he got it on his way to Toronto when he stopped in one of those roadside restaurants with only one meal on their menu.

How original - he thought and here you have it: Starting today, you can send Hurontaria postcard to your friends [HERE](#). There is nothing to pay (we even included the stamp), nothing to buy, the card is bilingual and there are also instructions how to send it. True, you will do us a favour by promoting Hurontaria, but imagine: it's tax-free. So send as many as you can and enjoy yourself with something which is rather unique: prefabricated one-and-only electronic postcard everybody was waiting for!

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"The theory of relativity says: the more relatives you have, the more money you have to spend."

Pls send me a mail to my address below; your comments will be appreciated. If you want to receive announcement of the new issue by mail, add the word SUBSCRIBE. We would also appreciate if you let us know where did you learn about Hurontaria.

Webmaster Jan(Honza) ©hurychj@hurontel.on.ca

Text follows:

OTHER DIMENSIONS: INTERVIEW WITH Dr. BLAIR

Dr. Gerard M. Blair,
(blair@info2000.net)

Senior Lecturer at the University of Edinburgh, is now with Hewlett-Packard in Fort Collins (Colorado). He has degrees in Mathematics, Computer Science and Electrical Engineering and he is the expert in many senses of that word: be it teaching, management, technical writing, CAD's development, and last but not least digital electronics and VLSI (Very Large Scale Integration - which is, translated into everyday English, design of microchips and their architecture). He also holds several patents and is well known for his many writings. He is also the citizen of NET and has his own page at: <http://www.ee.ed.ac.uk/~gerard/> with very interesting contents.

Some of his books and publications:

G.M. Blair; "Starting to Manage: the essential skills", Chartwell-Bratt, 1993, ISBN-0-86238-336-6.(in the USA by the IEEE Press).

G.M. Blair, MOS Circuit Design: an explanation , Chartwell-Bratt, 1992. ISBN-0-86238-307-2

G.M. Blair, Starting to Manage: the essential skills , IEEE (*Engineers Guides to Business*), 1995. ISBN-0-7803-2295-9

He also writes articles for various IEE and IEEE publications (like Electronic Letters, Journals, Engineering Guides, Engineering Management Journals), Hitachi Kempo, Management Development Review, Higher Education etc. His articles are on different subjects and we cannot list them here all, but you can find them on his page:

<http://www.ee.ed.ac.uk/~gerard/publications.htm> and the text of many of them is there

available, too. Dr. Blair worked in Scotland, Japan and as that was not enough, he recently moved to Colorado, where we reached him with our e-mail. The following interview is related to his book: *Starting to Manage: the essential skills*.

JAN:

Dear Mr. Blair,

I am writing articles about interesting subjects for enzine Hurontaria. In order to bring in the opinion of experts working in the particular field, we are asking the selected person some related questions. In my function as a redactor, I already succeeded in the past to get answers from people like R. Dawkins, A. Hale, T. Pratchett, P. Cochrane, C. Pickover, H. Rheingold, etc.

It is my my pleasure to inform you, that you were selected this time as our next expert. It would be nice if you could answer for our readers these questions:

1) In your book "Starting to Manage: the essential skills" as well as in the series of articles on Management Skills, you are bringing up very interesting points. One of them is - and I noticed it often myself - that managers are recruited (or shall we say promoted) from people who, as individuals, are generally good at their job, but when faced with managing the group of people and complex problems, they sometimes fail miserably. Is it because of the lack of training or shortage of managing "talent" or maybe something else?

Dr. BLAIR:

The greatest difficulty in becoming a manager is in recognizing that it involves a completely new set of skills. One may be promoted because of a superb engineering design or because of a stunning sales record - and are then expected to build teams, delegate authority, even train the unmotivated. These new tasks have nothing to do with the skills previously demonstrated yet the implicit expectation is that the new manager must cope. In some organizations, "management" talent is deliberately cultured - and promoted - but in most it can only be grown by training those who deserve promotion for other reasons.

JAN:

2) It is my impression, that manager's work assumes many dimensions, such as decision making, handling material reserves and people, and last but not least facing the limitations imposed by higher management. In some cases, the upper management

simply does not manage, but issues orders and managers are judged by their obedience. Do you consider this problem rather common?

Dr. BLAIR

In an organization where management rule by edict (rather than by consultation and understanding), the experience of staff is lost in the decision making process. It comes down to this: the majority of contact between a company and new situations, customers, problems, etc is through the lower levels of the staff hierarchy. They are best placed to both react to change and to make informed decisions. If these people do not understand the reasons for management's decisions, they cannot inform management when the situation has changed and decisions will often be made on old information. Secondly, if staff are not consulted in a decision, they will not be as motivated while implementing that decision.

JAN:

3) What would you say is the ratio of (knowledge gained by training / knowledge gained by experience) needed for solving particular, non-repetitive problem? For instance, while being experienced in my field, I am still using methods such as Kepner-Tregoe's and they help me a lot.

Dr. BLAIR:

Management skills can be enhanced by training - especially training which allows exposes the experience of others. It also helps to have a personal system in place for dealing with new, unique problems so that (at least initially) the analysis and immediate response comes naturally. By this I mean, have a set of questions which you always ask: what are the causes of this situation, what is its impact on current plans, is it actually important, how long can I spend on this, what action could defer a decision until more information is available, what sources of information are available, who in the staff has experience related to this situation, etc - and this sort of response can be developed in training and honed through experience.

JAN:

4) Good management, like any control system, needs mainly input, control method, feedback and power element. Sometimes, it also needs anticipation, or shall we say - feedforward. And sometimes, it needs also common sense (which is, needless to say, not so common any more). How much weight would you put in common sense, if any?

Dr. BLAIR:

But management "is" common sense - or at least the answers are common sense. The problem for a new manager is in recognizing the questions which have to be asked - and in finding the time to ask them. It is obvious that staff need a "development plan" - but the manager must actually pose the question: what development plan is needed for X to do the job, and the common sense answer will follow. And perhaps what is most often misunderstood is that the answer does not have to be optimal - just good. In management we deal with people who change in response to situations and who also change the situations to which they respond. Thus the environment changes so quickly that no manager can keep track - except the person changing. Thus the trick is to pass on the questions to your staff and so enable their common sense to manage their work for you.

JAN:

Thank you again for your answers in the name of our readers,

Yours truly,

Jan Hurych,
Hurontaria

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LIFE: MEMORIES...

We all have them: memories of good times and bad times. Memories we treasure or some we try to suppress. Barbara Streisand even used to sing about them. . .

Those memories however are not a subject of this article. I have in my mind the plural of the word *memory*, by which I mean some storage device, be it mechanical, electrical or biological - yes, *bio* AND *logical*, if you pardon the pun. I am talking about *our brain*, which maintains all kinds of information, some useful, some useless, some even dangerous.

As much as it is powerfull, our memory is not unlimited neither in space nor in time. For centuries we tried to cook-up some "memory helpers", from *mnemonics* to pocket diaries or "memory storage devices", from magnetic tapes to computer chips. The term *memory storage* of coarse is rather superfluous - there is no memory without a storage. Except for WOM, but very few people are aware what it is, because it is only inside joke.

First computers used relays, which stored memory as *bits*, that is one contact represented one bit - the bit being one particular answer to one particular "Yes or No" question. Problem was that they could hold it only while the electric power was on. Pretty soon the bunch of relays was replaced by so called "magnetic" memory, consisting of ferrite beads which could hold data even after the electric power was switched off. They called it RAM - *Random Access Memory*, i.e. when you knew the location or as we say *the address*, you could find the answer anywhere in the memory very quickly. There were of course the other, so called *sequential* memories, which were awfully slow: typical kind was the magnetic tape and you had to go through them always from the very beginning. However, even the little magnets were rather slow so we invented semiconductor type memories, *chips*, which similarly to relays again lost information when the power was turned off. Another invention came: programmable chips, where the microscopic fusible links were burnt. Well, as they say: you win some, you lose some - they were permanent, but you could not overwrite them later. They called them ROMs - *Read Only Memories*, which was a misnomer: you could also write into them, but only once of course. The new semiconductor type memories were also called RAMs - another misnomer, because ROMs could be also randomly accessed. I guess it was this mess that lead to the joke: WOM is a "Write Only Memory", that is you can write in it, but you cannot read from it at all...

True, such a memory is rather useless unless you are looking for something which you really want to forget, which was their only purpose, as the joke explained. Still, WOMs do exist and let me tell you a secret: I even have one WOM at home. Not only at home, I carry it with me - in my head. As I get older, I keep forgetting the things I once remembered. Trouble is they surely must be there somewhere because I haven't erased nor overwritten them. I just cannot read them - therefore they must be WOMs. The other interesting thing is that when I go further back in time, the more things I cannot erase from my memory. So that part of my brain must have somehow turned into ROM (I can read them but cannot erase them or in layman's language "get rid of them").

Several years ago, my father visited me in my pace near Toronto and suddenly he remembered Charlie, his friend from high school. Charlie used to live somewhere in Toronto and he might have been still alive. Both chaps haven't seen each other for 50 years and there was only little hope for that. Nevertheless, I went through telephone directory and surely enough, his name was there. So I picked up the phone, dialed and guess who answered: Charlie himself. We drove to his house and two old timers recognized each other immediately.

Now comes the strange part. First, I have to explain that in European schools, every morning the list of all students is read in alphabetical order and their presence is recorded. On that evening, Charlie somehow started to recite the names of their

schoolmates. My father joined him and to my surprise, they both knew that list by heart. Actually, I remember neither of them missed more than three names and there was a total of forty altogether. Well, I guess if you were listening to it every day for few years, you might have learnt it by heart, too. Even after fifty years, you may still remember something - but just imagine: at the same, time my father could not remember what he had for breakfast two days before!

There are many things about our memory which we find rather unusual. Naturally, in spite of the fact that we normally use about fifteen percent of our whole memory capacity, the amount we CAN remember is somehow still limited in space and time. That's why I could forget within few days most of the stuff I had learned for exams. I believe it just made the space for other bunch of useless data. "Useless", if you have learned it just for that exam, that is. We know from recent studies that there is a time dependance of remembering process and also that the frequent repetition makes memory more permanent. It is speculated, that remembering is some kind of biological process, where new neuron connections are being established if not really grown during the process itself.

Yes, the main elements of human memory are called *neurons*. While computer data are stored in chips and *data processing* (i.e. logical decisions) is done somewhere else (i.e. usually in the microprocessor), neurons remember and *can do logic* as well. The recent research could not however establish their location in the brain itself, it seems to be spread all over the brain. There is a speculation that brain contains information the way the glass sliver of holographic plate contains the whole picture.

The process of remembering as well as losing the memory is still unknown in all details. You probably remember the time when you could not remember something and then later it came unexpectedly up again. Obviously something was still trying to retrieve it from some place or even re-establish the lost connections. There are interesting cases of people who temporarily lost their memory and later gained it back. The process how that happens is not so well known either and mother Nature keeps some of those secrets still deeply in her pocket.

Yes, we cannot keep our memory as fresh as it used to be, even if we try to exercise it - they say it helps to retain it longer. In the middle ages, the intelligence was measured mostly by student's capability to memorize. Nowadays, this ability is still needed, but extra memorizing skill does not impress anybody, because we cannot compete with computers anyway. Even by today's standards, some already "obsolete" computers can memorize several books in few seconds. There is however one thing we can do: since neurons can be also used for *thinking*, why don't we try that for a change? The possibilities are numerous and beneficiary, too. For instance: could you imagine the

world where even politicians are able to think?

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SHORT STORY: THE NIGHT TRAIN

I was delayed that evening. We have been drinking little bit and normally, I would accept my friends' offer and sleep in their house, but not that day. I had to get back to Trnov, because I had an important appoinment I didn't want to miss. Of course, they offered to drive me back but I figured that there was no need of it and I could catch some sleep while on train.

They drove me to the station then and I said good-bye and boarded the rain. My compartment was empty and peaceful, but as much as I was trying I just couldn't fall asleep. Fortunately, I also had some mystery book which I always carry with me for such circumstances. Contrary to other people, the more interesting the book is, the faster it works on me. Soon I fell asleep rather quickly, so quickly that I later couldn't recall what was the last thing I was reading.

I guess I was sleeping for about an hour when something, or rather somebody, woke me up. A new passenger entered the coupe. He was in his forties, but he might look even older to somebody who didn't see too many people like him. Maybe he was not alcoholic, maybe he was just sick, I couldn't tell. Come to think of it, he looked quite sober, when he spoke. And he did speak - he said "Hello" and few neutral sentences, the way the strangers say them when they meet other strangers.

I do not like to talk to somebody I don't know so I closed my eyes and pretended that I was sleeping again. Of course, I could not sleep anymore and once a while, I even opened my eyes. Every time I did, I realized he was also watching me, yes, he almost certainly stared at me all the time. It was disturbing to say the least, as well as the fact that there was no particular reason for it. If there was any, I didn't know it: there was nothing interesting in me at all, nothing he could study so intensely, unless of course he was waiting for me to to fall asleep and then peacefully rob me.

So I kept my eyes opened and looked through the window, watching the strings of lights from nearby houses, as they kept emerging from the darkness. It was futile: there was nothing interesting about them and the night was quite black, moonless. Still, it was better than looking that guy face in face and get involved in a conversation I was not interested at all.

"May I smoke?" he asked. There was nobody else in the compartment except us so the question was obviously addressed to me. "Sure, this carriage is marked *For Smokers*," I answered. My voice was not offending but with intonation which should discourage any further conversation.

As it happened, it did work for a while but it was expected. He lit the cigarette, but didn't say anything, contrary to usual routine. Keeping my eyes opened, I could see that he was desperately fighting with the urge to tell me something, but for some reason could not. I put my book away and concentrated on him.

I had enough time to look him over in more detail. He was dressed inconspicuously, the way the common people do. He didn't look poor, but at the same time it was obvious he did not have more money than he could use. He had sport jacket and jeans, all those usual things the people wear. It even looked as he shaved himself not too long time ago. Over and all, he looked more or less decent. That put my worries somehow in rest and I tried again to get some sleep, but with no luck.

"Sir?" he said and I knew I would not escape my ordeal.

With a smile, which was supposed to show it was not particularly sincere, I snapped at him: "Yes?" Well, I had to gain some time to be ready for what was coming to me. Little did I know what would follow.

"May I ask you something?" he said while I imagined another boring conversation taking place until we reach the final destination.

"Ask away," I said and closed my eyes in desperation. It wasn't because I am not a social type, but I did have my experiences. Some people just have to talk and talk - not that I blame them, I just cannot stand them. I also knew how it was going to end: you see, I am a sucker who always get victimized by that kind of people. Still, I didn't want to give up so easy and I was preparing ahead the series of answers, such as: "Yes, very interesting. No, I would never think about that. Yes, that was very smart."

Slowly, as he started to talk, I closed my eyes, but he grabbed my shoulder and exclaimed: "Oh no, please don't fall asleep, I have to talk to you. Very urgently!"

Obviously, he saw through my little game. Full of frustration, I opened my eyes and said: "O.K, what's the matter then?"

He paused, gathered his breath and almost whispered: "You can save one human life."

"My dear fellow," I articulated slowly, with all sweetness of a polite rejection, "I am not a Samaritan. I might jump in water when I see man drowning, but do you see anybody sinking around here?"

He looked little bit confused, not by my reluctance but rather by my answer. So confused he was that he clammed up and it looked like I would have my sleep after all. I closed my eyes again, but suddenly it came to my mind: all things I could anticipate when I reach Trnov. The trip on the subway, a stay in one of the local motels, the whole day of negotiations and eventually the lunch with some boring representatives of our customer's company.

The man sitting in front of me finally gathered his courage and addressed me again: " It's my life you can save, Sir. Please, help me, I beg of you!"

Well, one cannot ignore such a plea, can he? Still, I the guy needed a lesson and I intended to give him one: "Listen, mister, If you want something, why don't you simply say it? There is no need for such theatrics, not at all!"

"Please, please, save me! Take this -" he urged me and at the same time was pulling from his pocket a small revolver and placed it in my hand. It was rather unexpected turn of cards and it was my turn to be surprised.

"No, thanks, " I declined and couldn't help to add the little lie or rather a joke:" I already have one of my own, you know."

He suddenly started to shake and raised the gun to his temple. "Then there is nothing else for me to do. I have to finish it. I'm sorry I have bothered you."

In that moment, I have lost my guard, jumped up and wrestled the weapon from him. It took me a while, but eventually I succeeded. I knocked it from his hand and it landed somewhere on the floor. He sat down, covered his face and started to cry. I guess I am not too sensitive to other people's pain, but somehow I felt sorry for him. I picked the gun and put it in my pocket, just in case he would try it again.

He kept sobbing, so I sat next to him and tried to console him : "Come, come, it cannot be that bad. Life is all that matters. There is nothing so bad to be worth dying, believe me, I know."

It didn't work too well since he kept weeping:" I do not have a choice, I have to do it!"

"If it is money - " I started, but he quickly interrupted me: " No, not money."

"Then tell me, maybe I can help you," I offered, somehow being glad that it is not money, after all.

"No, no, I was wrong, you cannot help me," he changed his mind and suddenly outstretched his hand: "Give me that gun, I have to do it now, while I still have some courage!" He went after my pocket and I automatically stuck my hand in it, to prevent him to reach the gun.

Then I realized, that he put his hand in my breast pocket instead and pulled out my valet. "What are you doing?" I asked him, while he dropped my valet in his pocket.

"Well," he replied with a smile on his face, which was still wet from his tears, "I guess you are not so smart after all, Sir. Otherwise you could have figured that I just stole your valet. You might be an educated man and me just a thief, but smart you ain't."

Quickly, I pulled the gun from my pocket and aimed it on him: "Give me back my valet, you thief!"

"Now that's funny," he laughed, "you are robbing the man at gunpoint and you call *him* a thief! Why don't you just pull the trigger, eh?"

I did, but it didn't move. "Safety," I thought, "I have to release the safety!" I looked at the gun, but it had no safety - there was no need for it, it was just a cast iron, a mockup.

"You see, I told you you are not that smart!" he chuckled. "Do you think I would let you have a real gun?"

I tried to lunge at him, but he ducked and hit me with his fist. Directly in my chin. I fell on the floor and somehow could not get up. He helped me and also returned my valet.

"Here you have it, Sir, but next time, please be more carefull. By the way, you should read better books than that one." He pointed to the book I had put aside. "Then you would know that this trick was already described in one of them. You see, I also read a little bit," he added.

At that moment, our train just stopped in one of those small stations near Trnov. He opened the door of our compartment and left. I pulled down the window, just to see him leaving the train a walking down the platform. Somehow he realized I was watching him, he turned around and waved. I waved back and smiled. "Strange fellow," I thought, "and fortunately for me, also the honest one."

I looked at the gun in my hand and after a short deliberation threw it in the ashtray. then i realized that I was still holding my valet in the other hand. I looked inside and - it was empty. Then I remembered the story he mentioned - I did read it after all - andI also recalled that there was nothing in it about returning the loot - the thief there simply kept it.

I sat down and tried to contemplate what had happened. Sure, he took my money, but it was just money, I would earn some more again. I could not even feel angry - rather sorry for him, if you ask me. Actor he was alright, but he didn't have a drop of imagination in him: he had to steal even the end of that story. Poor devil was already sentenced and punished. Quite unmercifully, if you ask me : he knew nothing better than to steal and obviously would have to do it till the end of his life.

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INCLINATIONS: THE HONEST ADS

We all know that some ads are less then honest. After all, they have to sell the product or some service. Can you imagine however, that they tell the truth and nothing but the truth, so help them God? Here you have some examples of it:

CUSTOMER

Just buy what we have in store,
and don't bother anymore.

All your wishes we ignore:
customer is such a bore.

CREDIT CARD

You may as well disregard
your favorite credit card,
if you are tourist at large,
we can always overcharge.

DISCOUNT

Brother, if you cannot count,
we will offer you discount.

You cannot get better deal,
shopping here is just a steal.... (for us, of course)

PLEDGE

We don't guarantee
any warranty.

PRESCRIPTION

This is doctor's dedication:
Do not use this medication!
If you still decide to buy,
you may kiss your health good-bye!

PRICE

Let your eyes bulge from their sockets:
we can reach deep in your pockets.
Somewhere else you may buy cheap,
prices here are high and steep.
We laugh all the way to bank,
while you carry home that junk.

QUALITY

Because of low quality -
your payment is charity.

REFUND

Here's the place of no return,
refunds are not our concern.
Never running out of tricks,
we promised it just for kicks.

SHOPPING

Buying here is only pain,
since your money we will drain,
why don't you just use your brain
and from shopping here abstain.

(By the way, these ads are not copyrighted and we encourage our businesses to use them
as many times as they please - at their own risk of course.)

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Commentary:

Sometimes, when I am about to finish the issue, I tell myself: I need something interesting to put in my Commentary. Mostly, I do not have any bright idea and you can see the results - it looks rather neglected and disorganized. Once I got an idea to write about something interesting, something what happened during the last three weeks, but I was afraid there wouldn't be enough space here for it. Actually, I'm slightly exaggerating, I could have put it in the Life section, but it was too late. After all, who is interested in my life anyway? Jaroslav Hašek, author of Brave Soldier Schweik, once said: "Human life is so complicated that in comparison with it, the life of a man is practically nothing."

Well, nothing interesting happened in last three weeks and that is rather interesting on its own. Of course it all depends what are we considering as being interesting. Everything is relative: things which happen can be either a) good or b) bad things. On the other hand, if the expected does not happen, it is in the case a) bad and in the case b) good. So here you have it, the real problem: how can be bad something which does not exist or good something which did not even happen? I guess I will now leave my philosophical speech at that - it won't be neither good or bad, but definitely much better.

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Note: Part B is in Czech, and the content is different. For Part B, please go back to Title Page.

"Two semiconductors don't make one conductor and two semi-intelligent persons are not equal to one intelligent one."



Pls send me a mail to my address below; your comments will be appreciated. If you want to receive

announcement of the new issue by mail, add the word SUBSCRIBE. We would also appreciate if you let us know where did you learn about Hurontaria.

Webmaster Jan(Honza) ©hurychj@hurontel.on.ca

Text follows:

OTHER DIMENSIONS: INTERVIEW WITH STEWART DEAN

Stewart Dean,
stewart@webslave.dircon.co.uk

describes himself in stats and is calling his home page <http://www.webslave.dircon.co.uk> "web space" instead. He is an expert on artificial life and now is also involved with interactive television. At the time I approached him for this interview, his page <http://www.webslave.dircon.co.uk/alife/intro.html> (lately freshly updated) was already containing the best compendium of Artificial Life I have ever seen on WEB. Originally, it was a part of his course on Staffordshire University. It is also very good introduction into Artificial Life for those who don't know the lingo. As he says on his page, "the truth is not out there, it's currently surrounding you". It was those statements which prompted me to give him some pertinent and less pertinent questions, and I was pleasantly surprised he answered them with all sincerity. His hobbies are many and his location is uncertain. In the meantime, he says he is "lost somewhere in West London".

From: *Stewart Dean*
To: *Hurych, Jan*
Subject: Re: Query

JAN:

Dear Mr. Dean,

(after official introduction): It would be nice if you could answer for our readers the questions below:

1) In your WeB page Alife you are mentioning that Artificial Intelligence and Artificial Life have only few topics in common. True, but that probably stems from the fact that artificial life can be defined much more specifically than intelligence (any intelligence), where we still use some kind of Turing test (reader, pls see Note 1) as a relation to human intelligence.

In my mind, the self-organization, adaptiveness, emergent properties and even the ability to replicate and evolve are by themselves some kind of "intelligent" activities. It may as well be that animals who according to us do not have "intelligent" thinking, are however controlled by processes, which are "intelligent", like their instincts etc. Those processes are actually more intelligent than existing "artificial intelligence". Shouldn't we better start to redefine the "intelligence" as such?

STEWART:

I agree. Artificial Intelligence as a field of study has, in it's past, been much a matter of trying to

working out the algorithm to do a task or setting up a '*chinese room*' (reader pls see Note 2) by using an expert system. Little learning and adaptiveness went on.

Now, from what I have seen and heard, Artificial Life and Artificial Intelligence have an awful lot in common. I would even go as far as to say the two cannot be separated. Artificial intelligence based upon the basis of learning, responding and adapting to stimuli independent of any programming is now accepted by many as the only way forward. The problem is the time needed to teach a neural network of any complexity appears to increase exponentially but, unlike a human brain, once a level of intelligence is achieved in an artificial mind it would be possible to clone this and then use these as starting points for further development, rather than repeating the process each time.

At the moment we have 'real' artificial intelligence of about insect level (possibly higher - there is a lot of work going on at the moment).

As far as Turing tests for life are concerned then a constant test may not be the best evidence of life. Because a life form/intelligence has coped with one situation may not mean it has the ability to then cope with another - adaptation (through evolution or learning from stimuli) is probably one of the things best to test when looking for life, that I agree upon.

The intelligence of a hive, as you point out, is higher than that of the individual members - a 'hive mind' could be said to be the result of the combination of all the 'cellular' individuals.

JAN:

2) *In our discussion with Mr. Cochrane (in AmberZine), he mentioned that they do have some form of "silicon based life" but it does not reproduce fully yet. When do you think we can cross the line and say that we really created new life - obviously the replication is not the major symptom of the life itself - and would we be really able to control its replication?*

STEWART:

I really think this is not down to the life forms but the environment. Can we say an environment created inside a computer can be seen as a real environment? If you mean a cross over the border into physical space that is a different issue which some are already talking about. I'm currently reading a book called '*March of the Machines*' by Kevin Warwick, a professor of Cybernetics at the University of Reading, UK

<http://www.cyber.rdg.ac.uk/people/>.

This predicts a world where we are '*slaves to the machines*'. (I much prefer the world like that in *Iain Banks*' novels about the 'culture' - a utopian like society where computers more intelligent than humans look after all the important stuff and have a strange paternal-like relationship with humans.

If you let an artificial life form loose on the Internet could we control it? Well if the network version of *Tierra* is to go by, yes. If you create a '*virtual machine*' - for the life forms to live in, much like *Java* lives in, then, providing the virtual machine is simple and solid then it would be very unlikely that these life forms would build themselves a code space ship and blast their way out. Even if they

did the environment outside the virtual machine would be so hostile that they would only last a few cycles.

All life forms need an environment which is not too chaotic. *Silicon based life* has existed for some while at a very low level (*Polyworld, Tierra* etc. all show classic signs of real life). If we create an oasis for life to grow on a computer then it may take years before it would want to even know about the outside world.

JAN:

Mr.Dean, we do appreciate your answers and I will publish them in our enzine.

STEWART:

Hope these answers are useful. Have fun,

Stewart Dean - Web slave

<http://www.webslave.dircon.co.uk>

JAN:

Thank you again in the name of our readers.

Notes (by Jan) : For those, who are not familiar with AI (Artificial Intelligence) and AL (Artificial Life) subjects, just two pointers from the text:

Note 1: *Turing test* - In 1950 Alan Turing published his now famous paper "Computing Machinery and Intelligence." In that paper he describes a method for humans to test AI programs. In its most basic form, a human judge sits at a computer terminal and interacts with the subject by written communication *only*. The judge must then decide if the subject on the other end of the computer link is a human or an AI program imitating a human. It is the judgement we are questioning, not the method.

Note 2: *Chinese Room* - John R. Searle's Argument: Suppose that a person in isolated room were given a set of purely formal rules for manipulating Chinese symbols. The person does not speak or understand written Chinese, and so he does not know what the symbols mean. The rules do not tell him either, they simply state that if a symbol of a certain shape comes into the room, then he should write down a symbol with a certain other shape on a piece of paper.

If someone hands in a set of Chinese symbols, the person writes down the answer according to rules. For example, for symbols that mean, "How do you feel today?" the symbols he writes down (as specified by the rules) mean, "Fine, thank you." According to Searle, the person in the Chinese room is doing exactly what a computer would be doing if it used the same rules to engage in a grammatically correct conversation in Chinese.

Thus, if manipulating Chinese symbols according to formal rules is not sufficient for the person to understand Chinese, it is not sufficient for a computer to understand Chinese, either. In short but not so correctly: computers cannot be smarter than we are. This may be valid for this generation of computers, but it is possible that AL (which is basically software, something like computer virus) based say on *genetic algorithmus* (remember Darwin?) may develop it's own thinking process different from ours.

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LIFE: WAPOOSWAYAN

(written for my Cree friends in Saskatoon)

There was once an old *mahkeses* (fox), living by the Waskesiu Lake. He did not have any relatives and his *owekimakuna* (wife) died the previous winter, shot by the hunter.

As he grew old, he was losing the strength and speed, but not his appetite. It was more and more difficult for him to catch the prey and he had to resort to trickery. But he knew only one trick however, and that was to put on the *wapooswayan* (rabbitskin robe) and pretend that he was a *wapoos* (rabbit). This decoy usually worked very well, since the wapoos is known to be rather silly.

Once in *paskawe-pesim* (June), he spotted a young wapoos feeding on the grass. Well, said the mahkeses to himself, that would be easy. He ran back home, picked up his wapooswayan and slowly approached his victim. "*Tanisi nitotem?* How are you, my friend?" he asked. "*Namoya nantaw*, I am O.K." said the trusting rabbit, "*Tanta ochi keya?* Where are you from?" "I am from those hills over there, " replied the mahkeses, but as he was pointing to the hills, his wapooswayan slipped and revealed his own hair.

The surprised wapoos asked in all innocence: "Why do you shed your fur, brother? You look now like the real mahkeses!" And the mahkeses replied smartly: "This is a new fashion, you fool! That's what they're wearing in the city now. Where have you been lately? Don't you know this is the twentieth century?" But the wapoos became suspicious and said: "You might not be the wapoos after all, but a mahkeses dressed like a wapoos! I have heard once about the *mahekun* (wolf) who dressed like a *kohkomimaw* (grandmother), to scare the little red Robin Hood!"

"He didn't want to scare her, you stupid!" explained the mahkeses. "Besides, it wasn't red Robin Hood but the *iskwesis* (little girl) named Little Red Riding Hood. Don't you ever read fairy tales?" "Why would the mahekun eat iskwesis when he can eat wapoos?" wondered the little wapoos. "And how about you, brother? *Ki moowaw wapoos che?* Do you eat rabbits?"

The mahkeses shook his head: "*Namoya, ni moowaw wapoos!*" "And what does the mahkeses eat?" asked the wapoos. "Oh, mahkeses is a vegetarian. He eats the grass, see?" and mahkeses took in his jaws the mouthfull of grass. And to be even more convincing, he managed a friendly smile.

That, of course, was a big mistake. With his smile, the mahkeses also showed his teeth which, as we all know, look nothing like the teeth of a wapoos. Even the silly wapoos recognized those teeth and quickly run away. Which is to prove that one is never too smart, not even if he is *the twentieth century*

fox.

Ekosi, that's all.

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SHORT STORY: STYX V.R.

(First published in Neviditelný Pes)

"Loneliness is bad for everybody, but especially for widowers," said *Dr. Charon*. "Since when you have been thinking it is the only thing you could do?"

"What thing, doctor?" I asked him, but I knew very well what he meant.

"Well, a suicide, what else?" he answered and smiled happily like somebody who guessed it right.

"But I didn't tell you that I want -" I started, but he interrupted me:

"We know more than you think," he said and added: "we know."

It scared me little bit, but I didn't dare to ask him what he meant by that "we".

"And it is good you admitted it," he carried on, "because as you know, a suicide is still the crime and the punishment for it is very severe." I looked at him in surprise. "Except when the suicide is successful," he laughed, "but this is practically impossible nowadays with all those modern methods of revival. Nobody - I repeat nobody - can escape."

"But I do not want to escape!" I screamed at him.

"You are lying," he said and his voice was irritated, "and lying is a serious crime too!"

"I just came to get some pills against my insomnia or something..." I started again.

"God forbid, that could put you in sleep forever! Mr. Orpheo, do you believe I would help you with suicide? Don't you know that assisting a suicide is the greatest crime of them all?"

"But if I do it myself and you wouldn't know anything about it?" I tried to be smart, but then I realized that I admitted my guilt and was immediately sorry I said that.

"Well, we then simply revive you and you will be sentenced to life everlasting, on this Earth, of course. You will not be - as the others, who served faithfully - terminated after thousand years, your body will not be eliminated and your soul will not be transferred in the Land of Chosen Ones. No Sir, you will have to live and work here forever and ever. . ."

"God Almighty, what am I supposed to do?" I exclaimed in utter despair.

"If you want the help of your gods then I recommend you to see a priest. I am only a doctor and according to my hypocritical - I mean Hippocratic - oath I am obliged to keep you alive. I am not allowed to assist you with your illegal exit.

"What am I supposed to do than, I just can't live without her!" I cried.

"Without what?" he asked not paying too much attention to me, probably because he was just writing something in my file.

"Without my wife, Eurydice! Tell me: how come she was allowed to die peacefully, but I am not?"

"Well, she hasn't died yet, she was just transferred in Nebula Hades by the order No. 2C375B, Section 6H. As far as you are concerned, we need you more here. So don't even ask me if you can be transferred too, because you cannot. And there is nothing I can do."

"Absolutely nothing?" I groaned in desperation.

"No, but in very difficult cases I can of course recommend the cure by STYX."

"Is that some kind of a drug or what?" I couldn't help asking him.

"Come, come, Mr. Orpheo, you know very well that we cannot use drugs since the time all their resources were destroyed. Many people took overdoses - either knowingly or by mistake - and we had to revive them again. That was very expensive and what's more: most of them became zombies and we had to scrap them anyway. No, no drugs Sir, we do everything electronically nowadays, by *virtuality* only. Yes, and virtuality is not even addictive. We have a system here, we call it *STYX, V.R.* It is the name of that legendary river," he explained, "you remember your Greek mythology classes from school, don't you?"

"They don't teach it any more," I said. "That V.R. - is it something like *virtual reality*?" I tried to refresh my memories from elementary school.

"Well, probably not the same they used to teach you about. It is holographic now and we don't use helmets and gloves any more. They were used in old times, when anybody could do it. Then, if you remember, the private use of V.R. was strictly forbidden by law and was restricted for medical purposes only," he explained. "We just insert some electrodes and sensors in your brain and -"

"But does it hurt, that insertion?" I interrupted, because I am rather allergic to pain.

"Not at all! First, as you may know, the brain does not feel it's own pain and secondly, the drilling is done by laser. Insertion of electrodes in brain is such a simple operation like say, for instance, the electronic delivery of babies. You will be able to travel to your wife, virtually of course and you will not feel lonely any more, " he assured me.

We discussed the subject for few more minutes, then he gave me a form to sign and told me to come next Wednesday.

I just could not wait: I was thinking what I might tell Deeka (those were our nicknames: Deeka and Oro) when I see her again. How to express my feelings, how to tell her I missed her so much? Should I bring flowers or is it also forbidden?

I expected to be anesthetized, but Dr. Charon just got me in his special chair and put strange earphones on my head. I didn't feel a thing. You see, I don't understand electronics, but if they can do such wonderful things with it, we should thank God for it - as my grandmother used to say. All I could hear was some pleasant music and then doctor appeared again and said: " Well, that's it!" and he took the earphones away.

"Wait, I haven't heard my wife yet!" I tried to stop him.

"Why, you were not supposed to, we just installed the electrodes in your skull. You can go home now, sit comfortably in your armchair and push this button." He pointed to some small box in his hand with the green pushbutton on its top."This control box is connected by radio to the sensors in your brain," he explained. "And V.R. will cut itself off automatically, after an hour. It is equipped with own watchdog timer, we call it *Cerberus*, ha ha!" he joked, but then he realized I did not know what he is talking about and added:" You don't need to turn it off, actually you will not even be able to." And he

laughed again, this time in rather strange way, like he knew something I did not know.

"Only an hour?" I could not hide my disappointment.

"Yes, for safety reasons, but you are allowed to use *STYX* every day," he assured me and winked, as if we were some kind of conspirators.

I put flowers on the table, lit some candles - Deeka was so romantic! - and poured *vin rosé* from the bottle of Cold Duck we bought last summer in New Jersey. I filled two glasses, of course. Actually, I didn't know if we would be allowed to drink a toast, but I did it anyway, just in case we might.

All excited, I pulled the control box from my pocket and pushed the green button. For a while I only heard some noise, more like a buzzing, and then brightly colored pictures started to flash in front of my eyes. Finally, I saw something like a corridor or tunnel and suddenly I was with her.

Deeka was sitting by small coffee table a reading something. I was watching her lovely profile for a while and I thought I was in heaven. She always looked like an angel when she was reading and suddenly, I was overcome by yearning and I sighed loudly. She raised her beautiful head in surprise and asked me: "How come you are already here, Oro? As far as I know you very always healthy as a fiddle." It was her alright, she was never good with proverbs anyway.

"Well yes, but I only came here through that *virility* or how they call it. You know, I am not here, I mean permanently, I have to go back to Earth." I stuttered, so much I was put off by her cool welcome.

"Oh, I see, this is just some sort of business trip, yeah? I understand," she said ironically. "You are now taking business trips just to see your wife. Well, surprise, surprise," she laughed at me and it was like some cold hand was squeezing my miserable heart.

"I just came to tell you how much I missed you" I tried to explain.

"I missed you too, you fool," she answered, but it was not too convincing.

I wanted to kiss her, but she jerked her head away as she was bitten by snake or something. "What are you doing?" she screamed. "Don't you see I have my hair freshly done? Do you want to mess it up?"

"I thought it did not matter," I said in confusion. No, it could not be her - she was always nice to me, not like this.

"What do you mean: does not matter? You simply don't care, do you? It's all the same to you if I look like a tramp, isn't it? No, you never really cared for me!"

"But *Deekee* - she particularly liked if I called her that way - look, I came here across all that distance just to tell you how miserable I felt -"

She didn't let me finish: "You said that already, you do not need to repeat yourself - I am not so dumb, you know. Besides, don't tell me you actually walked all that distance. I don't think you would ever do something like that for me!"

"Do we have to argue, honey?" I moaned.

"So now I am arguing, am I? Listen to this: I am arguing with him! And tell me: who came to see *me*? Did I come to see *you*, did I?" She was furious: "I was so foolish, all that time I hoped you would

change, but you are still the same, without feelings! Don't you remember how much I have suffered because of you?" She started to list all what had happened before and her memory was always very good, unfortunately. Only this time, something was different: she was neither forgetting *nor* forgiving.

I was listening and listening and after a while I stopped listening at all. Finally, I was saved by that automatic Cerberus, which turned her off. I exhaled with deep relief.

I looked at my table with two glasses still filled with wine we didn't even have time to drink. I picked one of them and gulped it down. Then the other one, only this time rather slowly, the way a wine is supposed to be drunk and enjoyed. And then I filled the first one again and emptied it as well.

I brought the bottle to our bedroom in spite of the fact that Deeka never wanted us to drink there. Before I finished it off, I had made firm decision to return that blasted *virtuality* back to my doctor and the very next day, for that matter. I could almost see his enjoyment and hear his satisfactory remark: "Well, well, another patient completely cured!"

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INCLINATIONS: LUCY

You can meet her
on the boardwalk
she's so young and yet so old
hitchhiking her daily ride
hitchhiking for daily bread

once a beauty
teacher's pet
abandoned by highschool sweetheart
left in rain she run away
left in pain she run away

then she found
this little harbour
place to raise her little child
when the blessed moment comes
when the fearful moment comes

life is unfair
life's a bitch
for the single pregnant mother
has nobody, has no hope
she has not a single hope

in the fear and desperation
for the child to have a home
was the little girl darling
being sold
yes, being sold

but the nights are wet and cold
when somebody
loves somebody
memories won't go away
memories are here to stay

she starts walking
down the boardwalk
every day and every way
giving anything she has
giving only thing she has

you can meet her on the boardwalk
walking down and down again
heading for the river bend
where the stone will tell her story
story which will never end:

HERE RESTS LUCY
WHO LOST IT ALL:
HER LOVE
HER CHILD
HER SELF.

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Commentary:

No, they didn't write about it in the newspaper, didn't talk about it in TV and you couldn't find it on NET. And let me add that only creature responsible for that is our dog Tara. Let me explain: we are often watching TV movies all the way till midnight - and of course then I have to walk our dog. It is a VERY important function which our family could entrust only to me. Not that I particularly like it, on the contrary. But it also has its advantages, even if it may not look like it does.

It happened last week. We went out as usual and rushed to the familiar place, the place Tara chose some time ago and became her favorite spot ever since. We were in a hurry, since I waked her up and she was rushing back to get some sleep. I glanced at the sky - I do it every evening, since I am trying to find a method how to tell time by the position of the Big Bear constellation. This may come very handy, if you are lost in the bush and have no watch. Unfortunately it does not work so well in the daytime. Anyway, I looked above and I saw beautiful, wonderful northern lights. It was rather unusual, we can see them here (at 45 deg latitude N) only three, four times a year and rather weak.

When I say wonderful, I mean it relatively and absolutely. I have seen auroras in Saskatoon (52 deg N) and even some at some "higher" places, but never were they so beautiful. Curtains, arcs, bands, veils, patches - all the shapes from vocabulary. Jets of lights were shooting with incredible speed, right over our heads, half way across the sky and directly to the moon. It looked like the War of the Worlds (from H.G. Wells) had just started. I called my wife Anna, so she can enjoy the spectacle and we stood there, watching it like some children, enchanted and amazed. Afterwards, I was even praised by my loved one and got permission to walk the dog henceforth and forever and ever, so help me God. Now tell me: isn't it great?

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"The repetition is the way to wisdom or just a sign of senility."

Please send me a mail to my address below; your comments will be appreciated. If you want to receive announcement of the new issue by mail, add the word SUBSCRIBE. We would also appreciate if you let us know where did you learn about Hurontaria.

Webmaster Jan(Honza) ©hurychj@hurontel.on.ca

Text follows:

OTHER DIMENSIONS: INTERVIEW WITH JEFF HARROW

JEFF HARROW

is a Senior Consulting Engineer with Digital Equipment Corporation's Corporate Strategy & Technology Group. He has over twenty-five years experience in the computing field, having begun by developing and implementing the first color graphic Executive Information System for a large aerospace company. Jeff joined Digital's Southern Region thirteen years ago to implement its first Network Planning and Installation business, and he later worked with Digital Services on network and network management products and services.

Jeff invented the first iconic network management prototype for DECnet networks, and he now works with various organizations and companies around the globe to help them better understand the strategic implications of our contemporary and future computing environments, and the technologies that drive them.

Jeff has several patents issued and on file in the areas of network management and user

interface technology, and he brings all of this experience together through "*The Rapidly Changing Face of Computing*" technology journal <http://www.digital.com/rcfoc> , "RCFoC Seminars," and related consulting to act as a technology mentor to over 150,000 people each week.

From: *Jeffrey Harrow*

To: *Jan Hurych*

Subject: Questions to : *The Rapidly Changing Face of Computing*,

Article : *Email - The Killer App!*

Date: May 21, 1998 10:04 dop.

JAN:

1) The statistics in your article are very interesting and the role of e-mail is undisputable. In fact e-mail is still broadening its services as well as adding new applications. Where do you see future use for fax services, the usage of which is now practically inferior to e-mail (not even considering the fact that every decent computer now can be used as fax as well)?

J. HARROW:

Fax remains the *lingua franca* of electronic non-verbal communications, providing the lowest-common-denominator ability to transmit text and graphics to almost anyone in business (and to many homes) without assuming they have a computer or an Email account. And, unlike its more flexible usurper Email, faxes are already held to be legally binding for some purposes. Even as Email's penetration continues to increase, I suspect that, for quite some time, faxing will remain a common business tool, even gaining momentum BECAUSE of the technology that is causing Email to spread like wildfire -- the Internet. Specifically, Internet Telephony. When used for voice communications, typical Internet telephony often suffers from delays and distortions which keep it from (currently) being a first choice for many users. However, these latency and delay issues are much less of a problem for faxing, and so the low cost of using Internet Telephony for sending faxes, especially international faxes, holds the potential for its increasing, not decreasing, use.

JAN:

2) The amount of e-mail messages sent every day is staggering, but I believe the amount of mail one is receiving can eventually reach some reasonable level. How would you value the advantage that one does not need to answer in "real time" but leave the answer for some time later (when there is more time or information available)?

J. HARROW:

There are many media which we can use for communications: face-to-face conversations, videoconferencing, telephone calls, faxes and letters, and of course Email, to name a few, and each offers us advantages and disadvantages. The trick is to use each at the appropriate time. For example, if I need an immediate response from someone I'm likely to walk over to him or her if they're local, or use the phone. For communications that I'd like to have some permanency but which aren't time-critical, a letter might be best; if time is of the essence, then a fax. And for communications to people whom I know have access to Email, and when the message can wait until the reader "gets around" to checking the Email (or if I want to include complex attachments or editable text), then Email could be the right choice. (Of course sometimes a combination of media is best, as in sending an Email or fax and then placing a quick "heads up" phone call.) The key issue here is "choice." If we mis-use a medium, such as by walking over and interrupting our neighbor every time we have a thought, or by expecting someone to respond to an Email within the next minute, we're bound to be disappointed. But by thinking about the BEST way to send each message, we can benefit from the best of each medium.

JAN:

3)That brings us to telephone, where this two way communication must be done in real time (well, not exactly, but it is often expected to be). Telephone has however more personal contact (in future hopefully the visual one on each telephone set). On the other hand, with video and conferencing, that's probably all we can expect from telephone in future. I personally use it with assistance of my PC - for dialing, making notes and also fax or e-mail follow-up. Do you expect in future that this might be provided by phone company all in one box, same way as it is in "TV internet" box?

J. HARROW:

There are already various "telephone appliances," often called "screen phones," which integrate aspects of assisted dialing, Web access, and Email; they are typically easier to configure and use than a PC, and often cost less, but they tend to trade off less complexity for limited functionality. That's not to say that such trade-offs are bad -- I know many people who would never choose to deal with the complexity of today's PCs, yet they might be willing to gain some of the PCs' benefits through a friendly "telephone appliance." As such, phone companies may choose to offer them, as will typical consumer electronics retailers. And that's one of the beauties of the Internet -- its common standards make it relatively easy for many manufacturers to develop a range of

"appliances," from the traditional PC to Grandma's videoconferencing box, and they can all make use of our growing "Information Utility."

JAN:

4) *As a former employee of Northern Telecom, I am following with interest their developments of "Internet on power lines". It is of course more attractive for Europeans, where the costs would be lower (more people sitting on one power transformer). Which media you would see most convenient for Internet in the future: telephone lines, power lines, cable TV cables or radio waves?*

J. HARROW:

I believe that one of the benefits of the "open" Internet (compared to proprietary networks) is that we can have many choices for "hooking up." As the Internet continues to mature into a "Utility" and competition grows, we're going to be seeing an increasing number of competing choices for that "last mile" connection. This is similar to how, in some communities, you can now choose telephone service from the phone company over copper wires, or alternatively choose to have your phone service delivered over your cable TV connection, bypassing the local phone company. Which one do people choose? It depends on the packages each utility offers, their reliability, and more. Similarly, people will be choosing how they hook up to the new Information Utility based on similar factors: features, cost, reliability, ease of doing business, speed, etc. And that's what I find most empowering -- the ability to let a free market economy compete for our Internet access. That will spawn a continuing round of innovation which will improve service while keeping costs down. That, to me, is a Good Thing!

JAN:

Thank you very much on behalf of our readers.

NOTE: These thoughts come from Jeffrey Harrow, a Senior Consulting Engineer for the Research and Advanced Development group at Digital Equipment Corporation (jeff.harrows@digital.com). He writes a free, weekly technology journal called "*The Rapidly Changing Face of Computing*" which explores the innovations and trends of contemporary computing and the technologies that drive it. This journal is available on the World Wide Web at <http://www.digital.com/rcfoc> or by subscribing for automatic Email distribution at <http://www.digital.com/subscription> . Jeff's comments do not necessarily reflect the opinions of *Digital Equipment Corp.*

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LIFE: THE ENCOUNTER

(Reminiscence from 1968)

Suddenly we have them everywhere: in parks, in city squares and of course on our highways. Russian giant with feet of clay still has arms of steel and is ready to prove it to anyone. When I was a little boy, I wondered why would the big guys find so much pleasure in beating up the little ones. But it is actually very simple - they can't do it to somebody who is bigger . . .

Then it is all over. Traffic in Prague is quite paralyzed, so I take a walk to work, along boulevards with tanks, trucks and tired, disinterested foreign soldiers. Finally I reach *Letna*, the greenest part of the city, now even greener because of their uniforms..

I take a shortcut through the park when I realize I am being followed. I couldn't miss it: a solitary tank is crossing the lawn, driving towards me, destroying on its way all the grass and shrubs. At first, I cannot understand. The fighting is over and what possible threat could I pose to this fully armed invader? I stand there too puzzled to feel any fear, but *the thing* is getting closer, slowly and with obvious determination. Then it stops, only few yards from me.

I wait for someone to come out. It feels like a scene from a movie about aliens trying to make their first contact with people. For a while, nothing moves. Then the turret starts turning in my direction and the gun barrel is slowly lowered. Now I understand: the playful tank commander is trying to scare me. Somehow I feel he wouldn't fire so I decide not to move.

I cannot see him at all, it's just the big bare beast made of steel - a silly looking dinosaur, which should have been extinct a long time ago. Finally, the little beast inside the big one realizes that the joke is on him. He starts the engine again, pushing ahead towards me. Now it's my move. To evade him, I am running sideways, but he follows. So I speed up my run, zigzagging to and fro. This is not a game any more: I am too close for him to see me and if I trip, he could run over me.

I climb up a nearest tree, panting and bruising my hands, but not feeling any pain at the moment. The tank stops again. The beast is waiting, its engine idling and growling. Of course, there is nothing I can do any more and apparently, neither can he. After a while, tired of this game which ended in stand-off, the green monster huffs and puffs, revs-up the engine and drives away.

Even now, its hatch does not open - but I am not interested in that joker's face anyway. His little silly game is over and maybe, one day, so will be the other one, the big one.

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SHORT STORY: BALANCES

He thought about it for a week and it all made perfect sense. His doctor gave him only few months to live and there was not too much time to waste. Even if it was the last thing to do, it would be worthwhile: something he should do to balance his account. . .

It comes with age: the idea of dying is not a pleasant one, but we all have to face it, sooner or later. Even if we really don't know when is our time due, we should be ready. But what does it really mean, to be "ready"? Well, some people think they should enjoy themselves as much as they can, others are trying to put their finances in order and still others, they start writing their memoirs.

Jason was not planning anything of that sort. Enjoyment? He lived long enough and he has been many places already. He loved and was loved. Money? He had plenty of it. And writing some fairy tales about himself - what a ridiculous idea! His name was good - he thought - at least good enough not to worry about the things people will tell when he's gone.

Still, he wanted to be ready when his day comes. Just to have a feeling that he balanced his account with life, if you know what I mean. That sounded alright, but whom he was actually accounted to? And what for? At first to God, that's for sure. Yes, he got absolution every time he went for confession, but he felt it was rather easy way out. Sure, he was sincerely sorry for his sins, so he deserved His forgiveness. But even with God's forgiveness, how about people? Somehow he felt he needed their pardon as well, since he had sinned against them, too. That's it, he had to balance his account with people. Maybe there was still some debt to be paid, who knows?

He wondered where to start. He figured out that he probably harmed some people at his own will and the others more or less without any intention. Jason decided to search his mind, to find whom did he hurt and do something about it. He never considered himself an evil person and in reality, he was not a bad guy. He simply didn't have enough reasons, or shall we say stimulations, to do bad things. He was not jealous, ambitious, lazy or even corrupt. He had no vanity, lust for money or desire for the properties of other people. And he had no need to cover-up his past actions or mistakes. Sure, he lied a little bit here and there, but never to harm anybody. Come to think of it, he knew very

few people who were as good as he was.

He started to worry if there was anything at all, anything he should settle the account with. In his consciousness, there was nothing serious, nothing really harmful he might have done. Sure, small things, but nothing really big. Could it be however, that he might have done harm without intent?

Well, he was once offered a position of the department head and he accepted. Of course, Jerry Morrow deserved it more than he - not that he was any better, but because he was there longer than Jason. But they chose Jason and that was all. He couldn't possibly say: "No, thanks, give it to Jerry!", could he?

How about his daughter in law? He never really liked her and sometimes he was not enough careful to hide it. She was a good wife to his son a deserved his esteem, but then again: extra friendliness was not expected from him. Or was it?

Then there was that fellow Marcus, his neighbour. One day, backing off his driveway, he hit Jason's expensive convertible. Of course, it was all paid by insurance company, but they also raised Marcus's premiums and he never forgot Jason that he claimed the damages. It was ridiculous, just imagine: Jason getting his car fixed and paying for repair from his own pocket!

Finally, Jason's brother Peter. He wanted to start the business and needed some cash money - a loan, to be accurate. He even offered him a partnership, but Jason refused. Sure, he chickened-out, but wouldn't you? There were good reasons for it: Peter was not particularly good with money and the only cash flow he ever knew was the one dissolving his assets.

Still, Jason felt that there surely must be somebody whom he did some wrong. In desperation, he took his whole life, day by day, and examined it very carefully. Finally, it struck him like a revelation: Toby, yes, Toby!

His mind drifted back to days he met June. Always smiling, always happy, she was the most beautiful readhead he ever met. June had a refined sense for the beauty and goodness of everyday life. At that time, she was enamored in Toby. And vice versa, as they say, there was no mistake about it. They were dating for quite a while and even planned to get married. Then entered Jason: man in his best years, who knew women and how to get their attention, how to please them. And last but not least, how to seduce them.

It started as a flirt, innocent short time affair, if you wish or more like another experiment to confirm Jason's irresistibility. Little did he know it would later change in something deeper, more personal, more permanent. It did, however. He toyed with fire and got burned. How? He felt in love with her, deeply, hopelessly and desperately. There is no point to argue that she also yielded to his advances, that she also fell in love, captivated by his charm, his galantry, his personality. That was excuseable, but in Toby's eyes, Jason must have been the only guilty party.

Soon, Jane forgot Toby completely. She had no choice: after all, she married Jason three weeks later and her hands were tied by the ribbon of holy matrimony, as the priest put it. However, Toby apparently couldn't forget - he never married and lived alone and rather quietly in his inexpensive house. The house he was originally building as their love nest and which he later finished, but couldn't offer her any more.

Yes - Jason thought - I had caused him a real pain, real grief - how come it never entered my mind I robbed him of his happiness? Sure, I hardly new him, he wasn't my friend and when it comes to women, every man is just a hunter. Everybody for himself, that's the first law of jungle. And then we had nice eighteen years together with June - nothing could possibly spoil that! Yes, she had to break with Toby and it was not easy, but she calmed down and forgot him for good. Well, all the time till her death, which happened two years ago. . .

Jason started his "balancing act" with Toby rather unobtrusively. He knew he could not go and ask Toby to forgive him, because he wanted to make it up to him. So he first joined Toby's bowling club and time after time he took him for a beer in a local pub. Toby of course still remembered Jason, but it did not seem to worry him. Soon they became friends and instead of drinking in tavern, they drank their beers at home, once at Jason's, next time at Toby's. They talked about anything and everything, but of course they never mentioned June.

As his sickness progressed and his time was running short, Jason was gathering his courage to tell Toby what he is planning to do. He had some money put aside, which he intended to underwrite to Toby in his last will. Surely he would understand that's all he could do. He couldn't give him June back nor all those years Toby was without her! All he wanted to hear in return was that Toby could find in his heart to forgive him. It was rather strange: he didn't feel guilty at all, but at the same time he needed his forgiveness. Just to balance the scale - he thought.

One evening, while sitting in Toby's house, Jason could not resist and finally touched the subject. "Have you ever been married?" he asked.

"No," said Toby, "and you should know why." It was quite obvious hint for Jason to stop prying, but he felt he had to carry on: "Yes, I know. You must have loved her very much. I can imagine -"

"I loved her more, than you can ever imagine," interrupted Toby, still peaceful, but there was a warning in his smile.

"But of course I can. I loved her too," explained Jason.

"I loved her more than you think I did," insisted Toby and his eyes had rather strange look, as being afraid of something.

"No, no - listen, I know. I realize it now," objected Jason, disregarding the signs of the coming storm. "That's why I would like to make it up to you."

"What did you say?" cried Toby, as he didn't believe what he was hearing.

"I said: I want to make it up to you," Jason repeated, realizing that he couldn't back-off then. He held it all for too long and finally wanted to get it over with.

"To make up what? All those years I hated you for what you have done to me? All those nights I wished you to die? All those years I wanted to kill you?"

Bewildered, Jason was watching the man in front of him. He expected harsh words - after all, there was bad blood between them - but he never realized that Toby would hate him so much.

"What for?" he started in his defense. "It was a fair play. We both had same chances and I won, that's all. What's wrong with that?"

"Same chances?" Toby's face was not peaceful any more, it turned red and his voice was shaking in anger. "You were well-to-do gentleman, with a promise of comfortable life, with nice house, with fancy friends and enough money to travel around the world or entertain in any other way that young, foolish girl! You call that fair play?"

"But it was up to her to make her choice. Why don't you blame her? It was her decision, she made it because she loved me. Actually, you cannot blame her either: it was not her fault she didn't love you any more!"

Toby froze, but just for a moment. He could not control himself any more: "You fool! She didn't love me? You do not know what you are talking about, old man! Do you see this sofa you are sitting on? Take a good look - that's where we made love. Many times, I tell you, so many times I forgot to count! And you say she didn't love me!"

Now it was Jason's time to be surprised: "What are you talking about? She never entered

this house - she could not, we were already married when you finished it!"

"That's right, you were already married. So what? That was not a physical disability!" He laughed, but it sounded more like he was crying instead.

"But how -" Jason's voice broke down.

Toby, now calm again, continued: "About a year after she married you, we met in downtown and she confined to me she wasn't really happy. She made a mistake, she said. It was not what she expected and she didn't know what to do. I begged her to divorce you and to come back to me, but she already had a child, your child and she didn't want to lose it. Then I brought her here, in my house, and she was mine again. I don't remember how it happened, but we agreed to meet here every Wednesday, week after week, year after year. You remember those piano lessons she had? Well, her teacher was my aunt and she agreed to cover up for her. I didn't want to tell you all this, but you forced me. You forced me, with your offer to make it up to me!"

Jason slowly regained his balance and was able to compose himself: "You are a liar, bloody liar! How could you spit on the dead woman? Don't you have any decency, man? Spare me your filthy lies about your former fiancée and my dear wife!"

"So I am a liar?" asked Toby, his voice normal again. "You want a proof? I'm going to give you a proof, you fool. Here!" He opened his desk's drawer and pulled out a package. Rather thick one - there must have been around fifty letters, all neatly tied together with red ribbon.

Confused, Jason automatically took the stack of letters and with shaking hands undid the string. He opened one letter in the middle of the package, put on his glasses on and started to read. He immediately recognized June's handwriting and the letter was dated, too. After a few moments, he folded the paper back as it was and put it in the envelope. What he had read was enough to convince him - to convince everybody. Still, he didn't want to give up.

"Supposing those are real letters and not fakes -" he started, but then, realizing that the details in the letter could not have possibly been known to anybody but June and Jason, he added with resignation: "Forget it, I know that they are real."

"You see," explained Toby, "I never really intended to tell you about it. No, neither did I plan any revenge, I really loved her, God is my witness. You may not believe it, but I still miss her!"

"So do I," admitted Jason, hiding his face in his hands. "So do I."

After a while, Toby broke the silence: "Believe me, I soon realized that cheating on you wouldn't solve anything, but she begged me to carry on. Wednesday after Wednesday, every week, until she died. It became her obsession, like she might think she could be able to undo what she has done. In your words, *to make it up to me*, do you understand? And now you are here, obviously not knowing anything about it and you also ask me to let you *make it up to me*. But as you see, you don't owe me anything any more."

Jason raised his head: "No, I suppose I don't. She must have loved you very much." Toby looked at him in surprise: "Do you think so? Sometimes I think she never really loved me. She had the best of both worlds: your money and my love. And I think you didn't owe her anything either. After all, she didn't love you and she cheated you with me."

"You are wrong, Toby," said Jason slowly. "I think she did love you. And she probably loved me, too. It seems she loved both of us very much. But it's too late now and we will never know." He finished his beer and then, without a word, he opened the door and stepped into the cold December night.

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INCLINATIONS: HAIKU SNAPSHOTS

HERE

HERE IN THE VILLAGE
A MOURNING DOVE CALLS SOFTLY
AS THE MORNING FADES

CITY

MEN OF THE CITY
HAVE NO SENSITIVITY
AND SO BECOME FAMOUS

NIGHT

A GARDEN LANTERN
BRUSHES A SHADOW OF PINES

AND OLD HOOT-OWL CALLS. . .

CHIMNEY

A NARROW CHIMNEY
HAS ONLY INNER BEAUTY
IN THE SUNNY AFTERNOON

SUNSET

SOMETHING IN THE AIR
BRINGS SURPRISE TO MY VISION
AS DAYLIGHT FADES

GEESE

LOW ON THE MOUNTAIN
GEESE BY THE WATER FOUNTAIN
MUST BE READY TO LEAVE AGAIN

GOOD-BYE

LIGHT FROM THE BONFIRE
DANCING ON THE TREES
I MUST KEEP MOVING

GIRL

NEAR THE SILENT WOODS
A YOUNG GIRL SWIMS IN CIRCLES
IN WHITE WATER LILIES...

MEN

RIDICULOUS MEN
ARE UNWILLING TO GROW UP
NEVER MEANS NEVER

BEE

AS THE BUSY BEE

DRIFTS FROM FLOWER TO FLOWER
ANOTHER JOINS IT QUIETLY

MOTH

A WHITE MOTH FLUTTERS
PARTLY HIDDEN IN THE MIST
BUT THIS HAS NO MEANING

CLOUD

A TINY WHITE CLOUD
ON A BREEZE THAT COOLS THE LAND.
THOUGHTS OF THE GOOD LIFE COME

MAIDEN

THE WADING MAIDEN
BATHES CALMLY EVERY MORNING
SINKING AND RISING

SPARROW

THE HUNGRY SPARROW
SEEMS TO BE LOOKING FOR FOOD
AND SINGS AS TIME GOES BY

PEACH

THE LAST PEACH BLOSSOM
DANCES QUICKLY ON THE WIND
BY THE GARDEN NEAR THE POND

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HURONTARIA - 10A/98

Canadian Czech-out Enzine Kanadsko-ěeský oběasník.

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Commentary:

Now is the time to celebrate: this Issue of Hurontaria bears number 1010. No, this is not a typo, only the decimal number 10 expressed in binary numbering system. It also means, that we passed - without actually noticing - Issues No. 10, 100 and 1000, counting *in binary* of course. Therefore, we can make two interesting conclusions:

- 1) the same numbers may have different meanings
- 2) we would have quite a lot of celebrations, if we adopt binary system in our everyday life.

On the other hand, instead of 10, we could have only two fingers, one on each hand. Come to think of it, it would be even more convenient to have one finger on the left hand and no fingers on the right hand (1 nad 0, get it?) . . .

Well, let's not put a wagon before the horse - but here we go again: how do we know that horses are better in pulling than pushing? Everything is relative, even the relativity itself. Take imaginary numbers, for instance. Actually, all numbers are imaginary, that is they are in our imagination only. *Zero* is imaginary: have you ever seen zero apples? The more mysterious is even the use of zero in number 10 (decimal 10, if you please): it only means that we have ONE decade of apples and NO more apples then ten.

Even our "ordinary" numbers are actually only imaginary. Have you ever seen number 5 - I mean a real number, not just the symbol for 5? It is not a person, neither animal nor object, it is just an abstraction. Mathematicians usually say "5" and don't specify of WHAT. They say 5 plus 5 is 10 and we are supposed to believe. But I am telling you, that 5 plus 5 is 12! Of course, only in *octal system*, but they automatically assume that we know they think in decimal, like normal people do. On the other hand, when they say 1 plus 1 is 2, they are wrong again! 1 plus 1 is 10! Well, only in *binary system*, so that number 10 is not the same 10 as we can see in the header of this Issue. Here you have it: 10 is not 10 - can we still believe in something?

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"I like people - I used to be one of them."

Please send me a mail to my address below; your comments will be appreciated. If you want to receive announcement of the new issue by mail, add the word SUBSCRIBE. We would also appreciate if you let us know where did you learn about Hurontaria.

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OTHER DIMENSIONS: INTERVIEW WITH CARLA SCHRODER

CARLA SCHRODER

is a former massage therapist who specialized in stress management and treating computer-related injury. She writes articles such as "What Real People Want" for *Computer Bits* (great stuff, just read Number 6!). They have such uncommonly common sense that it is a pleasure to read all of them. In her own words, she is "a computer guru, and writer, and all-around rabble rouser". However, I think she is best described in *Computer Bits*: "Carla Schroder, ace computer coach, can relate to people even better than to computers" and it makes her really special. You can find *Computerbits Magazine* at: <http://www.computerbits.com>

Also, she has her own page devoted to girls - not just any grrls, but Geekgrrls. *GeekGrrls* is an informal association for women who want to succeed in high tech. Their mission is "Women supporting women!" and their page is at:
<http://www.angelfire.com/wa/geekgrrls> (GeekGrrls, for women in high-tech.)

Carla's e-mail address is: da_bratgirl@juno.com

From: Carla Schroder (General Employment)

To: 'hurychj@hurontel.on.ca'

Subject: interview

Date: June 05, 1998 12:34 h

JAN:

1) In your article "Joy of Stress" you quote Dr. Hanson and his book of the same title. I have recently read another one of his books, called "Counterattack!" and it seems to me, that you both are trying to point out that we ourselves are our worst enemy, because of our habits, be it eating or others, mainly those of our lifestyle. Without realizing that, we can't possibly make any progress. Sometimes it even takes drastic means - for instance I quit smoking only after my friend died. However, even if we change our eating habits and our lifestyle, there are still our bodies with their organs and processes which differ from one individual to another. How much do they contribute to our health and how could we learn more about it?

CARLA:

There is the jackpot question. There are so many factors that affect our health and longevity, it is impossible to accurately quantify all of them. I take the successful gambler's approach: play the odds. You can look at your family's health history to get an idea of what you may be at increased risk for. Let me go off on a brief tangent here: when scientists talk about risk, they are discussing probabilities, not certainties. Do not be fooled by scary numbers, look carefully at what they are saying. For example, when they say "A certain population group has a 30% higher risk of getting skin cancer." This does not mean 30% of the group will get cancer. It means there is a control group they are comparing the high risk group to. In the control group, say 10% are at risk for skin cancer; in the high risk group, that mean 13% are at risk. (30% more).

So when you examine your family history and see certain illnesses, use this information to minimize your risk. If there is a lot of skin cancer, or diabetes, or hypertension, or

whatever, educate yourself about early warning signs and make sure your family doctor looks for these too. Doctors are not nearly as interested in your well-being as you are, don't be shy about telling them what to do. A healthy lifestyle will benefit you no matter what. It really is simple, just like our wise old grannies always said: get lots of sleep, lots of exercise, eat a balanced, varied diet. Clean air, pure food and water. Choose work you enjoy. There is no sure-fire method to ensure health and long life. You are born with a certain potential, and you want to make to most of it. I am sure you know people who lived very healthy lifestyles, and still were stricken with serious illnesses or died young. Then there are those who do everything unhealthy, and seem to thrive. All you can do make the best for life for yourself that you can. And relax! Enjoy your life.

JAN:

2) Lately, many "health food" recipes and advices appeared. How do we find out which are really helpfull and which are rather ineffective? Are there any medical tests performed on their results?

CARLA:

This too is a great question. Don't believe everything you hear! Check out Dr. Andrew Weil's Web site, "Ask Dr. Weil" <http://cgi.pathfinder.com/drweil/>, that is a great place to start for honest, accurate information. You can also go on Usenet or DejaNews and seek out newsgroups on the topic you are interested in. You have to be extra skeptical, but you can pick up a lot of good information from people who have actually tried different things. There is not a lot of research on this that I know about, at least not in the USA. Other countries have a long history of herbal and holistic medicine, the best information I know of comes from China or Canada.

In addition to having a good family physician, you should also find a good naturopath, acupuncturist, or herbalist. A good practitioner can help you determine what supplements and foods will benefit you. Many herbs are potent, and have the potential to harm, I strongly recommend you seek expert advice. While it is good to read books and educate yourself, you will get the best results from an expert. The bottom line for any type of healthcare is: how do you feel? If it works, you will feel better. If it doesn't, you will know!

JAN:

3)Many people are in favour of vegetarianism. What would you advice to people who find it hard to become vegetarians (for whatever reasons)? Do vegetarians have to watch their diet in order not to deprive their body of some important food components?

CARLA:

Personally, I think vegetarianism is not healthy. This is an individual thing, some people's bodies do function better on a vegetarian diet. For the most part, humans are omnivores, and need a wide variety of foods. People who want to live on a vegetarian diet have to be very careful to get enough iron, protein, calcium, and certain B vitamins; these are abundant in meats, but not so easy to get from plants. Meats are much more nutrient-dense than plants. I believe that Asian-style cuisine is the best: small portions of meat (more fish, shellfish, chicken, tofu, less beef and pork), lots of veggies and grains. Very little dairy. The quality of the food is very important, you want the freshest and the best. Most vegetarianism is political, rather than based on health concerns. I like what my friend Michelle told me, after she served two years in the Peace Corps in Hungary: she said she learned to accept with gratitude whatever food was available.

JAN:

4) More and more people are using computers, which brings new types of strain: to their eyes, their bodies in general and last but not least to their minds. This imposes new conditions on stress management and I think it is very important to deal with it before it is too late. What would you recommend to somebody, who is planning to manage computer related stress effectively?

CARLA:

1. *MOVE!* Get yourself up out of your chair frequently and walk away. Stretch and swing your arms. Make time in your life for lots of physical activities.

2. *Take many eye breaks.* Look at far away things, and close your eyes to rest them.

3. *Good workstation design.* Your monitor must be at a comfortable eye level, at least 24" away. Keyboard and mouse must be on the same level, and rather low, almost in your lap. Chair must hold you upright, feet flat on the floor. The ergonomic keyboards are very good, such as the Cirque Wave, or Microsoft Natural keyboard. They take some getting used to, but are well worth it. Most mice are terrible, they require too much force to click. The Contour Mouse needs very little force, I love it. It comes in several sizes, right- and left-handed. Trackballs and touchpads are also good, in fact I recommend them over a mouse.

4. *Massage.* This should be a regular part of your health maintenance anyway, and even more so if you spend a lot of time at the computer. A weekly massage will pay off in big

health benefits: better sleep, better blood flow, and more energy. It is especially effective at preventing computer-related injuries, most carpal tunnel syndrome and related injuries are caused by chronically tight muscles.

Tools shape us as much as we use them to shape objects. My hands are my best tools. I have always had good hands, the ability to know exactly how much to tighten a screw; to apply just the right force to open a fragile container without damaging it; to know where and how hard an animal wants to be scratched. In my massage practice, I could read people's bodies accurately with a light touch, and know where they were hurting, and what was needed to relieve their pain.

Now that I am a full-time computer guru, my hands are used abstractly, in a menial role. They are not allowed full expression of their abilities. I think about this a lot. It takes a bit of skill to type well. That is the only manual skill required to operate a computer. It is all abstract. When I am working on the computer and a program does not work, there are no tactile clues. No sounds, smells, textures. It is all in the head.

It is a two-dimensional world. This has to affect how you think and relate to the real world. Perhaps if your primary interface with life is a computer, you will lose tactility and become dulled, just like people who watch too much TV.

Humans of the future are often portrayed as having very large brains and atrophied bodies. I do not believe this could happen, our brains and bodies are a single unit, and need all parts to be well-developed. If we let our bodies deteriorate, so will our brains. If we let computers be our dominant tool, we must be careful lest we become very smart in a very narrow way, and regress in every other way. What computers do well is model real things. But they are only models.

JAN:

Thank you very much on behalf of our readers.

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LIFE: YOU CAN FINISH MORE THINGS IN SHORTER TIME

Do you sometimes have that feeling of the frustration from unfinished work? Worries about your capabilities, fear that you simply are not up to it, the *chagrin* for the lost hours and energy, even the danger of losing your job because of it? No, you don't need to answer if you do . . .

I was like that, too. I blamed my boss, my parents, my enemies, my fate, I even hated Summer Saving Time. Then something unbelievable happened: I have found the *real* reason for all that: it was myself, me, yours truly. It's that simple and if you are like me, you may even profit from some advices I can give you. But then again, if you are like me, you may not . . .

There are of course several ways how *to avoid* that problem first place, namely:

- 1) Don't work - that is if you were born rich. I have a distant feeling I somehow blew that opportunity.
- 2) If you work, try to avoid difficult tasks. That is not as impossible as it sounds. I know several ways how to do it, but most people will hate you afterwards.
- 3) You pass difficult tasks onto somebody else, but beware of the same consequences as per point 2).
- 4) Get sick, die or quit. Join the army - frankly speaking, you may get more than you bargained for and eventually you will also get sick, die or quit. If you are a girl, go to convent or marry a rich boy. If you are a boy: go to monastery or marry a rich girl - unfortunately there are not too many rich girls who are also stupid enough to marry the boy without means.

The rest of you, or shall I say *rest of us*, we are stuck with our work, our tasks, our problems, our stomach ulcers and our insomnias. Don't get me wrong, what I will present here is not *the universal solution*, it's just a *list of solutions* and some of them may fit you as little as the glove fits a glove compartment.

How did I find out? I used my special method: I call it *idea mapping* and it is really very simple: you get a map, any map and you keep staring at it. Continuously repeat secret mantra "gooseberry" (some say even "Londonderry" will make the trick) until some crazy ideas start popping in your head. Don't worry if it does not work for a while - it did not for me either. Actually, it still does not work all the time, but it cannot do no harm either: it isn't addictive, has low caloric content and it is 100% natural.

My real discovery came with the single statement I have read somewhere: "Of all the time we spent at work, 30% of it gets 80% of total results." I grabbed my calculator and quickly figured out, that approximately 70% of our efforts will be then spent on remaining 20% of all results. Frankly, I could get that number without calculator, but I wanted to be doubly sure. Now what does that tell us?

Well, obviously there is a reason behind it. The remaining work is either:

- a) too difficult,
- b) cannot produce too many results,
- c) results are mostly wrong or useless, or
- d) our work is plagued with too many coffee brakes.

I searched through my work projects and most of them were of category c) and d). O.K., so I eliminated coffee brakes. It did not improve my results a little bit (a binary bit for that matter). Wrong results? I didn't have any. Useless results? Plenty. And here you have it, my discovery: *most of our work is useless*. So why do we still do it? Thanks to our fantasizing, or rather that of our boss, due to poor judgment, wrong priorities and possibly even because of irregular thermal fluctuations of our mind.

Now let's do some mathematics: if I do only tasks from the first group, that is *those useful and productive ones*, my 100% of time can suddenly achieve 266.66% of results. It may not proportionally increase my salary and I may even get more work (hardly the thing I was after), but it can give me the confidence I was looking for.

of course, you may find my advice dubious, impractical or even ridiculous. It's all up to you. Just imagine that you will NOT tell your boss all this and by simple postponement of the other, *useless group of tasks* (temporarily - you can't postpone it forever), you gain more time to increase for increasing your output. Or if you prefer, you may still get same 100% of results as before, but also more time for your coffee breaks. Isn't it worth trying?

You may not start right away, just follow some of these hints:

- do not get tied up too much in details
- break the task in stages and postpone later stages
- reschedule useless tasks for next millennium
- avoid giving helping hand to others
- engage others to do your work for you (good luck to you then, you will need it!) - do not start anything you cannot finish in one hour - do not waste time discussing things with others
- don't fill your reports with facts or explanations
- avoid any advice, good or bad.

I am sure you will find even more effective ways than those I listed, no doubt. One last comment: you may wonder why I named this article *YOU Can Finish* That's because you have to do it *yourself*, I can't do it for you - I can't help you, I am too busy

right now. I still haven't finished this Issue of Hurontaria . . .

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SHORT STORY: THE PLACE CALLED OBLIVION

Young stewardess finally reached our row, serving drinks and conventional smile. To do her justice, I have to admit that she looked like she probably smiled quite sincerely. Not bad, considering that she was still paid for it. I ordered coffee, because I felt I really needed it. My neighbor, whom I hardly noticed before, made his choice: "Coca Cola, *por favor!*"

As he passed my coffee to me, he smiled and said: "There is nothing like a good coffee."

"Yes, " I replied, " and this is nothing like it." We both laughed at that old joke and exchanged few pleasantries. I thought our conversation was over, but suddenly he said: "Go ahead, ask me!"

"Ask you what?" I inquired, being rather puzzled by his question.

"Ask me, where I am from," he suggested.

"Why should I? Is it of any importance?"

" No, but everybody keeps asking me that very same question," he explained.

"It may sound rather snobbish," I replied," but I am not everybody, far from it. However, if it makes you happy, I can tell you that I also consider such question rather stupid."

"My opinion too, Sir," he agreed and we both laughed again. "Where are you heading, Sir?"

I noticed him calling me Sir, which was most likely the expression of politeness - as it was supposed to be - but with some people you simply never know. One thing I never tolerate is to be made fool of. "I thought we agreed that there will be no stupid questions," I said, rather rudely. "So why don't we just reverse the game: I will tell you where you are from and you will guess where I am heading, agreed?"

"O.K., where am I from?" he asked.

"Judging by your accent, you are from Latino country, Spanish speaking. You will

switch planes in Miami to fly south, to Central or maybe South America, to -"

"No, no names, please, " he interrupted me.

"All right, I will call that place "*Oblivion*", if you insist. "You are returning from some long trip back to your wife and family, all impatiently waiting for you."

"*Posiblemente*," he smiled. "And now me: you are going to take a short vacation in Miami and your family will meet you there. How am I doing?"

"Pretty bad," I said. "I will rent a car in Miami, drive north to Fort Lauderdale and there I will do some certification of that company's computer. No vacation, no Sir, just hard work as usual, " I fully enjoyed proving him wrong.

"Please, don't call me Sir, I'm Miguel. And as far as you are concerned, you are quite off too. Yes, it was a long trip - six years, that is over two thousand days and I recall every one of them. No family, Sir, and as far as my wife is concerned, she is not my wife any more."

"I'm sorry, Miguel. What happened?"

"Do you really want to know? It's a long story," he warned me, but I could sense he would like to confide to somebody, so I said: "We have an hour before we land. I bet it is quite an interesting story."

"It is, I promise you. Her name is *Soledad*. Have you ever met a woman, who was so beautiful it almost made you cry? She was that kind of woman - her face was so sad and she looked so vulnerable, like an angel, like somebody out of this world. There is not so many women like that, you know. You almost feel that you must not love them, because they would never love you, that you are nobody and you don't deserve her. You see in them beauty so mysterious, so powerful, that you are immediately lost. Like some holy picture, God forgive me! But we met and fell in love. I was happy above comparison - she was unreal and she was mine. After my graduation, we got married and I started to teach at our most prestigious university in -" he stopped.

"In Oblivion, " I added.

"*Si, si*, in Oblivion, " he smiled. "Can you imagine my happiness?"

"Well, it's been long time I have been married, but yes I think I can," I agreed.

"She loved me, dearly and passionately. I was all she had, all she needed - so she kept telling me. For two years, we were young and happy, then it happened."

"Did she pass away?" I was curious.

"No," he answered. "I lost her. But that's a long story."

"You said that already," I objected. "Go ahead, finish it. It's not polite to keep me in suspense."

"It's not that, Sir. I just don't want to put you in jeopardy," he explained.

"Don't be ridiculous, how could it possibly endanger me?" I asked with astonishment.

"I am a fugitive, Sir, if you must know it."

"And the CIA is after you? That is not my problem Miguel, I am not from States. If they want you, they can get you, but I do not need to help them," I said. "After all, they have their airport security and they pay them well. How come they even let you board this plane?"

"Oh, no, *Americanos* are my friends. They took me as political refugee, they actually helped me. I am talking about *my* country -" he waited and when I nodded, he added: " - Oblivion, yes, Oblivion. Very fitting name, Sir."

"But they are there and you are here. Or have they sent somebody after you, hired gun or something?" I speculated.

"You wanted to hear my story - let me tell it and you will understand."

"That's what I am waiting for," I agreed. His secretiveness started to irritate me.

"*Bueno*. As I told you, I lectured at the university and in the meantime, things were happening in our country, things very few people knew about.

One night somebody knocked on our door. It was one of my students and he was bleeding. I didn't ask who shot him: the less you know the better. My wife helped me to dress his wound and I went out to get a doctor. Doctor fished out the bullet from his shoulder and our guest left the very next day.

That was the same night the group of enthusiasts started the revolution, which was

quickly defeated and military *junta* seized power. What followed was just a series of arrests and executions. Then, one day, they came for me. The charge was "sheltering the enemy of state" and sentence was of course the death."

"Well, but I can see you are still alive," I noticed, rather sarcastically.

"I can't tell you how I was freed without endangering the life of some other people."

He was getting on my nerves with his continuous stressing of the word 'danger': "I didn't ask you how, did I?" I snapped at him.

"No Sir, you didn't. It was wrong from me to presume that." Suddenly, he set there quietly, apparently offended by me. As a punishment, he obviously decided not to tell me the end of his story.

"So was my presumption, " I admitted. "Please, carry on."

He continued, but I could feel I lost some of his confidence. "Yes, I got away, but not because I cooperated - if that is what you suggested. Even if I wanted, I didn't know anybody. However, that is not the price I would pay for my life. Actually, they got my name by torturing that student, who gave them my address. They did not care that I was innocent."

"But you were hiding a fugitive, a conspirator. How can you say you are innocent?" I asked.

"I didn't know he was the conspirator. I didn't ask, I was just trying to help a wounded man, that's all."

"Come, come, he was not hardly shot by some hunter, do not offend my intelligence. You were hiding him and you had to accept responsibility," I protested.

"But he was not a criminal, it was the junta, who were criminals. You *Americanos* could not understand that."

"I am not American, my friend, but you can call me *gringo*, if it pleases you," I informed him.

"You see, now you are offended! I shouldn't have told you the story first place."

"THE story? I thought it was YOUR story," I inquired.

"It's nobody's story," he snapped back. Then he realized he went too far and with light heart, so typical for his race, he graciously forgave me and obviously expected the same from me. "Let's not argue, Sir, we both were wrong - you didn't believe me and I should have known you would not understand."

I realized the sincerity of his statement: "You are right. So everything is OK now? But you said that you are going back - I didn't know they proclaimed amnesty in your Oblivion?"

"No amnesty, no Sir. I am simply going back for my Soledad."

"Why suddenly now, after so many years?"

"I didn't have money then," he said and I realized how silly was my question. "I needed money to get her out."

"But that would be - no, you don't mean it! Do you know what is waiting for you? That would be suicidal!" I suddenly felt he really meant it.

"I am going back to my Soledad. In order to protect her, I once wrote her she had to divorce me. She did and she is now very much married again, but to somebody else. All that time, I couldn't help thinking about her. I simply can't live without her: she is like my soul: without her there is no life for me. I treasure her photograph and have been looking at it every day. You see, I promised her to come back so I am returning to her now."

"Coming back to what? The police in Oblivion is very effective, they told me," I was shocked. "If you ever spoke to anybody about it, they probably know you are coming. Even now, they may have a spy on this plane -"

"I know," he interrupted me, "I know all that. Still, I believe that I will be lucky this time. I changed my name, I look different and what's more, I believe that my love will get me through."

"I wish you all that luck you may need," I said quietly. His determination gained my respect. Not the decision itself, mind you, he didn't have a slim chance in hell, as far as I knew. Besides, there was something else and I had to tell him. "But she is married now, you yourself told her to get divorce. Will she go with you? Maybe she is in love again, maybe she leads a happy life now. Some women are like that, you know."

"Not my Soledad. She cannot be happy, she was so much in love with me - you had to know her. She still loves me."

I didn't want to be impertinent, but I thought there is still time to change his mind: "How do you know?"

"I have a letter from her, it arrived four years ago. Here," he pulled some old, rather worn envelope out from his pocket and tried to show me the paper inside.

"No, please," I objected, "I believe you. But four years is a long time. Besides, she may already have children by now."

"No, no children, I got message from my friend who checked it out. I know she is waiting for me."

"Did you ask her?" I could not help inquiring. "I mean recently, through your friend there."

"I tried, but he could not get close to her, she married some bigshot, you know. But I know it, deep in my heart I know she will go with me."

"But you would have to escape again, this time both of you and that will be difficult," I insisted. "Isn't there any other way? Besides, you should have prepared her for it ahead of time."

"I could not, believe me, Sir, but I am sure she will be glad to see me again."

There was something in his optimism which was somehow contagious. Still, the questions kept popping in my head - it was all so unreal: "Your friend could not get to her and you will be able to? It does not make sense, does it?"

"You see, my friend didn't want to risk it, he had his own family to protect. For me, it is different. I have to do it, I simply have to. I prayed to my patron saint and then I had a dream, very good dream. I know everything will be all right, don't worry."

I gave up. After all, sometimes one has to do what he has to do. I was only afraid that while he couldn't live without her, he wouldn't be lucky enough to live with her. Then I remember one time in my life, when I was supposed to fight for my love. I didn't and needless to say, I lost her. Who am I to try to dissuade Miguel from his plan? After all, he may have devil's luck and get what he wants. I closed my eyes and I saw another girl, also beautiful. The girl with very sad face, the face which makes you cry . . .

We landed safely. It was crimson summer heat outside, but the air in Miami airport corridor was cold and comfortable. We were standing there and I felt that all he wanted to hear from me was some kind of encouragement.

So I told him: "Listen, Miguel, I once lost a girl because I was too much afraid, *cobarde*, you know. If this is your only chance, take it. I did not have another chance then and I lost her forever. I wish you all luck and if you succeed, send me a postcard, please. Here is my address and you may visit me with Soledad any time. "

"I will, " he promised and blissfully shook my hand, happy like a little child. "I will, I will! *Muchas gracias!*" He then took his little handbag, entered the gate and disappeared in oblivion. I never heard from him again.

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INCLINATIONS: VERBS AND PROVERBS

There are two opposing forces: environmental and mental.

Six hundred years ago, it was *politically correct* to claim the Earth is flat.

If you can't beat them, run.

If it is *not* worth doing, it is not worth doing it *right*.

Arrogance is a younger sister of *ignorance*.

All men are born equal, some are just short of money.

The common sense does not support common wealth.

The perfectionist can be *wrong* too, but only when he *thinks he is wrong*. Since he is always *right*, he must be *wrong* about that.

Murphy's complements:

Murphy's Law No. 1.: Whatever can go wrong, it will.

Murphy's Law No. 2.: Whatever cannot go wrong, it will anyway.

Combination of Murphies No.1 and No.2.: Everything goes wrong, irregardless.

Murphy's corollaries:

Whatever can go wrong, it does not need to, but it has to.

There is no point to fix things since they will eventually go wrong again.

If anything can go wrong, so can You. Enjoy!

Jansan's proof of general possibility:

Assume statement: "Nothing is impossible" (what follows is the proof by tautology, i.e. by circle):

1) If "*nothing is impossible*" then "*everything is possible*".

2) But *nothing* is a part of *everything* (i.e empty set is a subset of any set, therefore also of the "everything" set).

3) Therefore if "*everything is possible*", then "*nothing is possible*" too.

Now this *may look* like we proved just the opposite, but stay with me:

4) Of course, if "*nothing is possible*", then "*everything is impossible*".

5) Again, according to (2): *nothing* is a part of *everything*, therefore "*nothing is impossible*" too, q.e.d. (quod error demonstrandum).

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HURONTARIA - 11A/98



Canadian Czech-out Enzine Kanadsko-èeský obèasník.

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Commentary:

As much as I was trying to hide it, HURONTARIA is issued in a tiny little town on the shores of Lake Huron, Ontario, Canada (there is one Ontario in Oregon - not a province just a town). Our town is called *Kincardine* and by the end of July, it is going to celebrate its **150 years of existence**. Our county is called *Bruce* and that alone can give you an idea how many Scottish settlers we have here. Well, enough to fill our famous *Kincardine Scottish Pipe Band* (since 1909) and also the whole Main street - every Saturday evening that is - when they march across our town and we, spectators, join them. Of course, not all of us are of Scottish origin, I for instance am mistaken for Scot only when I am tipping in the restaurant. We came from many corners of this spaceship called Earth, but we all like good music, that's all.

Kincardine (Penetangore) used to be very famous harbor at the beginning of the century, when the schooners were still happily sailing all over Great Lakes. Our lighthouse (built 1880 and still ticking) is the most famous around Huron shores. Story has it that back in 1856, the family of Donald Sinclair from *Isle of Skye* (the island made famous through Bonnie Prince Charlie) was coming to settle here. They boarded their ship, but the storm and darkness was making the landing quite difficult. So Donald picked up his pipes and played a lament, which was quite convenient, all things considered. Soon he was answered by another piper in Kincardine. Needless to say, it helped the captain to find his way to the harbor, but the piper there was never found. However, you can still hear his pipes and watch his silhouette against the lighthouse tower. Some say it must be a piper from our band, but the others will swear it is the ghost of mysterious piper, who once saved old Donald and his ship...

The lake - well, it's the third largest in the world (if we don't count Caspian and Aral seas) and has the largest sweetwater island (Manitoulin Island). When fall comes, the storms here are as bad as those in North Atlantic. If you don't believe me, ask the

captains of ocean liners who are sailing our lake too, thanks to Canadian waterways - or even better, read the short story in this Issue. . .

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Note: Part B is in Czech, and the content is different. For Part B, please go back to [Title Page](#).



"Every great love ends in sadness: they either part or get married."

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OTHER DIMENSIONS: INTERVIEW WITH BRUCE P. BURRELL

BRUCE P. BURRELL
bpb@umich.edu

Bruce is the AntiVirus Team Leader at the University of Michigan, and is the technical

member of their Virus Busters group. He has been active in virus control since 1988, is a long-time participant in comp.virus/VIRUS-L and alt.comp.virus , and is a contributor to the FAQs for both those newsgroups. He is probably best known for his Quixotic crusade against removal of viruses by using an undocumented switch of FDISK.EXE.

Since December, 1995, Bruce has performed his duties as a pioneer telecom(p)uter for the University, while he accompanies his wife as she goes from postdoc to postdoc, where she studies food webs in and the chemistry of lakes. First they were in St. Paul, Minnesota, and they are now in Oslo, Norway. They look forward to her first tenure track position and a less nomadic lifestyle, so that they can have canine "children" again.

Bruce's other interests include power volleyball, close-up conjuring, and ballroom dance.

NOTE: Bruce is also the top expert in Data Recovery. To get his attention, I introduced myself as an expert in data loss ("You choose it, I lose it"), which impressed him enough to grant me this interview.

From: Bruce P. Burrell
To: Jan Hurych
Subject: Re: Interview Questions
Date: July 13, 1998 11:47 h

JAN:

You are an expert in data retrieval. While I realize that to ask you some general questions will require answers which would greatly exceed the space we have here, I do not want to go too deep in details. Considering that most of our readers have only personal computers, what are the most common ways for data to be lost and when we can still recover them?

BRUCE:

The most common ways are accidental deletion, and "something happened" -- the file (or whole computer) doesn't work, disappears entirely, or the system crashes -- what I often refer to as "*God sneezed*". The key things to remember here are:

1. If the file has never been saved (e.g., it is lost because of a system crash before the user saved it manually), it's probably lost forever unless the word processor (or whatever) makes automatic backups.
2. When a file is deleted, its DATA remains on the disk; only the pointers to the data are lost and the space it used is released for future storage. That means that if no

- further writes to the diskette or hard disk take place, the data can be recovered. [That may not be easy, but it is **possible**.] When it's a case of some damage (not just deleting by accident), it's less clear whether the data can be recovered successfully.
3. ANY writes to the disk after the file has been deleted **might** cause parts of the file to be lost forever; the best strategy here is to remove the diskette (if it's a floppy, of course) and immediately write protect it. If it's a hard drive, the best bet is to shut down and not use the computer, though that may not be practical. Remember that merely not intentionally writing to disk isn't enough -- Win95 and other operating systems write to disk at their whim.
 4. The most important point is this: While you may not be able to access the data, IT **ALMOST ALWAYS *IS* OUT THERE**. All it needs is proper time, care, and sometimes money to get it back. More often than not, those not trained in data recovery can't get back lost data; preventing matters from getting worse, however, at least will allow a chance for a data recovery program (more on this below) or expert to be successful.

JAN:

I guess the best prevention is to be careful and to make backups very often. But mistakes do happen. Could you please tell our readers what they should and should not do in such case? What recovery methods and programs can you recommend?

BRUCE:

As you say, regular backups are a very wise habit. But when disaster strikes, it often seems to happen when no backup is available, which establishes my maxim that *"Computers can smell fear."*

What to do?

1. STOP. Don't panic. *The worst thing to do now is act quickly*, and make a potential disaster into an actual one.
2. Remove the diskette and write protect it (floppy) or shut down the computer (hard disk).
3. Evaluate:
 - a. How important is the lost data? Perhaps it's possible -- albeit annoying -- to start over and retype it.
 - b. Does a "recent enough" backup copy exist? If you have a backup but you don't know how good it is, test it **ON ANOTHER COMPUTER**. We don't want to write **ANYTHING** on the computer that experienced the disaster.
 - c. If neither a) nor b) are viable options, do you have a printed copy? If so, then your best bet may be having the hard copy optically scanned or re-enter the data

exactly by typing. (Optical Character recognition has come a long way in the past few years -- even formatting is recognized. Very impressive.)

4. If these aren't possible/viable, then you're in the "data recovery" zone:
 - o a. If the data aren't -that- important, consider doing it yourself (particularly if you already have data recovery tools like Norton Utilities and a verified system backup). Be forewarned, though, that for various technical reasons, automatic undeletion is not always successful.
 - o b. If you're trying a "do it yourself" job, ALWAYS WORK ON A DUPLICATE, NOT THE ORIGINAL whenever possible. Also, this is a lot simpler if the data were deleted from a floppy -- obviously it's easy to work on a duplicate of a floppy, but not of a hard drive!
 - o c. If you're going to contract with a professional to get the data recovered, be aware that this can be an expensive proposition. Still, it may be a lot less expensive than the alternatives, like losing one's business.... For some pointers on selecting a reputable data recovery service, see my primer on this topic at <http://www.umich.edu/~wwwitd/data-recovery/primer>.

JAN:

Most of us use Windows 95, which unfortunately get corrupted very often and then we are stuck with time-consuming re-installing (if you know parameters of your hardware) and some customizing, such as desktop layouts etc. It happens so often that most dealers do it before they even start troubleshooting.

In my case, they recommended me to re-install Windows from CD-ROM. However, all I got was a "Safe" mode and my computer couldn't run CD-ROM from there! I took it to the shop and eventually they found out it was cache chip. Next time, I was ready: I have found out some software, which can reset the start-up routines, avoiding the missing or corrupted files, which normally leads to the painfull re-installation of Windows. Is there any way to minimize the Windows crashes at all?

BRUCE:

Ummm -- "Don't Use Windows"? But seriously: there are several things that can be done:

1. Keep regular backups (hint hint). A particularly good time to make a backup is when (a) things are working well and (b) you want to install something new.
2. Make an emergency boot diskette that contains the drivers to access the CD-ROM drive from DOS. That allows one to reinstall Windows when one can only boot in Safe Mode or not at all. The procedure for this varies with computer manufacturer and model; on some machines it may not even be possible to do this. But it's well worth the proactive effort to try to make such an emergency diskette.

3. Back up your Registry before installing any new software. Then you can (usually) at least go back to the last known-to-be-working configuration. Look into the CFGBACK.EXE tool; it's in Other\Misc\Cfgback folder on the Windows 95 CD-ROM. It allows one to make up to 9 backups of the Registry. For most folks, 9 copies is probably enough, e.g., if things are working ok, one can save the 10th backup after deleting the first one, the 11th after deleting the second, and so on. Better yet, though, is keeping the whole set by making a backup of the first 9 (e.g., with ZIP) and then making a second 9, and so on, or saving new backups onto floppies. See CFGBACK.EXE's on-screen information for details, and CFGBACK.HLP file if you need more assistance.
4. Use "mature" software, e.g., *be wary of version 1.0 of anything*. It's a good idea to keep an eye on things before installing; for instance:
 - a. Check out magazine reviews and the like. Of course, commercial mags tend not to review FreeWare/Shareware, but it's worth a quick peek
 - b. Look in the appropriate newsgroups, e.g., comp.sys.ibm.pc.* (many possibilities here, e.g., comp.sys.ibm.pc.games.strategic, or whatever) or alt.comp.shareware
 - c. Search on the web for information about the new programs you're considering installing. Concentrate on finding sites that specialize in the particular area (e.g., a review of antivirus software is likely to be better at a site specializing in virus control than it would be at a site offering all kinds of Shareware). Look for **corroborating** information; don't take the first thing you find as gospel
 - d. Do remember that there's a lot of information out there, and its quality is variable, but a little looking now may save you a lot of pain later
 - e. Ask around; perhaps friends/colleagues/folks at the user group meeting may have experience with the program you're considering, or even suggestions for a better alternative.

JAN:

The plague of modern computing are of course viruses. Could you give us any good pointers, especially for those, who like to download freeware and shareware?

BRUCE:

Sure; I have several suggestions:

1. Get a top quality antivirus product, keep it current, and USE IT. Since many (like more than 200) new viruses are written each month, keeping up-to-date really is important. [Note, though, that while there are over 20,000 viruses that exist, most aren't "successful" -- fewer than 500 are a real problem "In The Wild".] For PC

platforms, I feel comfortable recommending two products: *F-PROT* is free for non-commercial use, and both *Dr Solomon's Anti-Virus Toolkit* and *Dr Solomon's AntiVirus Deluxe* are excellent commercial product (as is *F-PROT Professional*) -- reasonably priced as well. There are lots of other fish in the sea, too, but I'll stake my reputation on these two product lines any day. Both are linked on the *University of Michigan Virus Busters web site* , which I help maintain.

2. If possible, avoid Microsoft Office, since its products are (macro) virus vectors (Word and Excel, in particular). This advice goes double if you don't have a background antivirus scanner running (e.g., *F-PROT's F-STOPW* or *DSAV's WinGuard*). Again, for more on this, see our web site.
3. If you download free software, always try to get it from its "home site", not from a redistributor. Obviously, the fewer middlemen, the less likely that the files are infected -- and, of course, the original author is the one most likely to be careful about providing an uninfected original.
4. In your web browser, consider disabling Java, JavaScript, and (if you -insist- on using Internet Explorer instead of Netscape, which from a security perspective you should NOT), ActiveX. All these (Java, JavaScript, ActiveX) in increasing severity can zap you; I disable them, and only turn them on if I'm at a trusted site. That means I lose some of the bells and whistles of the web, but my system remains secure.
5. Make sure that your browser doesn't launch Word or Excel as a "helper"; instead, use e.g, *WordPad* (part of Win95), or *WordView* and *Excel Viewer* (available from <http://www.microsoft.com/office/office/viewers.asp> . The point is that WordPad and Excel Viewer can read documents that contain macro viruses, but they don't interpret them. There are plenty of instances of virus-infected Word and Excel docs out there on the web -- unintentionally. In fact, there are several cases where they've been on Microsoft's web sites, though eventually they were removed.

I hope that's helpful to your readers; they may feel free to email me bpb@umich.edu with further questions or comments.

JAN:

Thank you very much on behalf of our readers.

BRUCE:

My pleasure!

BPB

University of Michigan AntiVirus Team Leader

University of Michigan Data Recovery Team Leader

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LIFE: FOLKFEST SASKATOON.

(First published in Neviditelny Pes)

I had to buy me a passport. No, not Canadian passport - this one is actually a ticket to Folkfest and is valid for all (almost twenty) pavilions where you get it stamped by their "ambassadors", one page for each "country". Folkfest is a festival of nations, songs, music, dance and - last but not least - of national meals. Similar festivals are organized yearly in many Canadian cities, but under different names. In Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, they call it "Folkfest" and **this year, it will last from 13 to 15 August**. Canadians are remembering by these festivals their ancestors, their roots.

Judging by the names of pavilions, they must have come from all over the world: Scots, Filipinos, Jews, Asian-Pacificans, Frenchmen, Germans, Hungarians, Africans, Ukrainians (traditionally two pavilions), settlers from United States, Pakistanis and Indians, Australians and New Zealanders (i. e. *aussies and kiwis*), Norvegians, Greeks and all the rest. Yes, the rest, like for instance all those gathered in *Hispanic pavilion*, which unites all nations speaking Spanish (i.e. Argentina, Chile, Mexico or, to put it simply, whole Central and South America) or Portuguese (Brazil).

Then there is a pavilion of *North American Indians* who are joined by *Métis*, the young and energetic nation, descendants of Indians and white settlers, half breeds but with full blooded vigor and energy. Just watch them dancing their jigs, similar but much faster than square dances, with a lot of complicated steps. It is a real feast to watch their young girls in black old-fashioned shoes and their men with sashes and fringes, tap-dancing to the tunes of guitars and fiddles. Indian girls, on the other hand, perform beautiful "butterfly" dances to the sound of ceremonial drum and of many little ringing bells, fixed to their dresses. Among drummers, I have noticed our company's computer wizard, hitting the drum with the same enthusiasm he is hitting the keyboard of his computer. Another Cree Indian was performing the famous "ring" dance. He had 21 of them hoops (remember Hula hoops?) and was assembling them in symmetrical patterns on various peripheries of his body, all that of course while dancing and hopping through them.

Philippinos have also very rythmic music - they use two bamboo sticks a clap them together, while jumping in and out of the space between them. I believe the main purpose of this dance is to avoid the serious ankle injury. Musical bands are there plenty: Scottish pipe bands, Ukrainian banduras, Louisiana dixieland, traditional Jewish music by Klezmer band, Australian rock (no, I do not mean Ayers Rock) and even Tyrolean

oompapa. You can also hear *jodl*, but listen carefully, some of "them singers" may be jodling cowboys from Canadian Alberta.

Everybody sings in his own language and that applies for the audience too. You can't help it and it does not matter that you don't know the lyrics, the humming is fine as well. When it comes to dancing, you can improvise all the way. And dance can be anything from polka to flamenco, from jive to macarena. Those, who don't have a talent for dancing (or figure, like me) can enjoy national meals and let me tell you: there is really too much of everything, you will not be disappointed. Besides, you can consume your food and at the same time enjoy watching the performers on the stage. Believe me, even Hungarian *goulash* tastes better when your eyes can feast on their girls, whose slim legs are dancing *czardas* in their red, cowboy-style boots.

For those who have strong nerves and large enough stomach, I have prepared here this international menu (you may fill the nationalities yourself, if you so wish):

- Aperitif - you may skip this one in order to make place for more serious drinking
 - Chicken: teriyaki, kari or adobo
 - Fajitas, tamales, tacos, nachos or souvlaki
- Shrimp (on barbie, Australian style), chapli kabob, haggis
 - Falafel, schnitzel, open face sandwiches
 - Buffalo or deer hamburger, bannock bread
 - Dimsum kitchen, Cantonese style
 - Falafel, bratwurst, kobasa and kjottkaker
- Blintzes, doughnuts, lefse, cake Pavlova (if you guessed Russia, guess again - that one is from Australia)

You can drink anything starting with margaritas, fruit punch, all kinds of beer and ale, sangria or even Greek *ouzo* (strong stuff, not for kids or drivers).

Children are not forgotten either: they can watch shearing of sheep, enjoy animals in petting zoo or even knocking down of *piñata*. Piñata is a dummy full of candies and the act apparently symbolizes the renouncing off temptation - but why do they eat them afterwards? For girls of all age there are many shops, boutiques and stands for spending their time and money, buying something for which they otherwise would have to fly, say all the way to Bombay.

You can see people of all ages, from youngsters to seniors, happily hopping around and boarding the special busses (free with your "passport") to get to other pavilions, spread all over the city. And all that was prepared by volunteers, that is they donated their time and work free, just to demonstrate they are proud of their heritage.

Can you blame me that at the end I didn't know if I was tired from too much food or just from running around with my camcorder - being the cameraman, director and script girl, all in one person? Finally, excited and tired, I sat down at the table in Bavarian pavilion and ordered great German beer, watched the people around and suddenly it struck me like a lightning: all those people here, they actually celebrate more than their roots.

They celebrate the wisdom of their ancestors, who brought here with them their national culture but also left behind that obsolete and quite useless *nationalism, racism or "revolutionism"*. They came here to live like good neighbors, if you know what I mean.

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SHORT STORY: THE ISLAND OF MY MYSTERY

(first published in Telegraf, Prague)

I always wanted to see some mysterious island and believe it or not, I have found one. I do not claim there are not others, even more mysterious, but none of them was so fascinating as this one - at least to me. It has its own mystery, the mystery I may never solve . . .

It happened on our summer trip to the very tip of Bruce peninsula. Huron Lake, bigger than some smaller seas, has terrible storms, especially at fall and in their severity, they can successfully compete with those in North Atlantic. I got that information from captains of some ocean freighters, who - thanks to Canadian waterways - could get all the way to Huron and as far as Lake Superior and Chicago harbor.

Many books were written about Great Lakes, their harbors and shipwrecks. There are many of them on our side of the lake and few mysterious ships as well, ships that disappeared without trace. One of recent ones, famous Edmund Fitzgerald, was hiding on the bottom for few years before they found him. Once during the single storm, twelve ships sunk near Goderich harbor. Even in our small Kincardine area, there is eleven shipwrecks. One of them, naughty *Erie Belle*, can be still seen partly exposed near our harbour.

Fast schooners from the beginning of this century cannot be seen here any more. There is 19 shipwrecks however in Marine Park called *Fathom Five* near Tobermory. The harbor there is the deepest on Huron, however the entrance is shallow and treacherous. The

place is also called "the Mecca of scuba divers" and you can bring there your equipment and gadgets to prove it to yourself. If you are not interested in diving, there is still plenty of other points nearby. You can get there from South (via Toronto) or from North, driving across Manitoulin Island, named after the Great Indian Spirit. It is the largest sweetwater island in the whole world and you and your car can board there the big ferryboat M. S. Chi-cheemaun to sail to Tobermory.

When you get there, you can enjoy a trip to some near islands, the most famous one being the *Flowerpot Island*. No, there are no flowerpots there, just giant rocks of the same shape. We took a cruise ship, but were not heading directly there, first circling the harbor and observing the most famous and visible shipwrecks. Some were so close to the surface that the glass bottom of our boat, provided for better observation, was almost scratching their decks.

Our boat was a little tugboat, later rebuilt for sightseeing trips. Judging by some brown newspaper clippings and old Canadian banknote, both neatly framed, it certainly had its own history. The ship was about 26 feet long but we squeezed there very comfortably.

The skipper, young Scot with rather impressive long beard, was commenting on all shipwrecks in great detail. He even stopped the boat above each of them and turned it around for the best view. We could even see the shafts and gearboxes, and at one place, he said in rather tragic voice: "And all passengers of this ship died -," then paused a while and added, to our relief: "- of an old age, of cause."

When we landed on the island, our captain informed us that he would be back and pick us at four P.M., at the landing and we better be there, otherwise we would have to stay on the island overnight. We all laughed to his joke, but he said he is very serious and the island was uninhabited, except for snakes. The sightseeing trail on the island went partly around the shore then it turned inland. After few minutes of walking, we could actually see those famous "flowerpots", about 60 ft high, with diameter 30 ft at the base and of course larger at the top. Eroded by water, they stood there on guard, resisting the elements of nature. Further up on our trip, we climbed wooden stairs to reach the island caves. They were actually very large, wide open at the front and protected by overhanging rock. They say the caves were once inhabited, but I don't think the people there stayed very long: the perpetual sound of falling drops of water would probably soon drive them crazy.

The path carried us even higher up on island cliffs, where we could see the lake and its untamed waves, breaking on the rocks. It sounded like somebody was slapping the

disobedient child. Water, the powerfull element, could not tolerate anything standing in its way. The rocks, on the other hand, were standing quietly and patiently. Only sometimes we could hear the scream of pain, but it was only the seagulls. Down under, rather close to us, a ship was passing but it didn't land. It was almost lunchtime and I started to feel quite hungry. We didn't take any food with us and I soon realized waht are the first sensations of some poor shipwrecked sailor...

We continued our journey. The main group of tourists disappeared and only one young couple stayed with us. They were from Ohio and were our companions for a while, commenting on the island like if they knew it well. Later, they turned left at the intersection and we were alone left us alone. We carried on to the northern side of the island, where we climbed up some stairs chiselled in the stone. Then we finally saw it: the lighthouse, proudly ruling it's surroundings, high above the cliffs. Next to it was the solitary house for the keeper, now deserted because the lighthouse was fully automatic.

Little lower, there was a wooden terrace, more like a platform or lookout, extended toward the lake, high above the water. You can see from there quite far away and the lake seemed to have no end. On the horizon, we could see one lonely sailboat. Similar one probably came to pick Scottish Bonnie Prince Charlie, when he lost his last battle, "to carry the boy who was born to be king, over the sea to Skye", as the popular song has it. It is also a pun: Skye is pronounced similarly to "sky" - and Charlie never seen his Scotland any more.

At the corner of the platform there was a little plaque:

" This place was chosen by Vicky and Larry Thomson as their wedding place. Two weeks before the wedding however, they drowned in this lake during the storm. Their boat and bodies were never found." We stayed there for a while, deeply impressed with that simple, yet so tragic statement.

Then we turned back and reached the landing place; our tugboat was already waiting for us. As soon as we took off, quite a strong wind was pushing our boat, which started to buck like a bronco on the rodeo, standing back on the stern, then tipped down on its bow, rocking like cradle, not sideways, but to and fro. Water spray was splashing over our backs and then hit our faces again. I tried to remember where could the life jackets be, not realizing that they could not help us too much - prolonged stay in cold water could have only one end - death by hypothermia. All that time, our skipper kept his cool or he was only pretending, one just couldn't tell.

Having reached this point, I should have ended my story, but the tragic death of young lovers was still occupying my mind. How come they had the same family name, even without being married? I also imagined the unhappy father of the bride, who lost his daughter and had to cancel the whole wedding, the dinner and all. . .

One night, he had a dream. His daughter Vicky appeared to him and asked him to carry on with the wedding she had been looking forward so much. As you can see, I took this idea from Ireland, where they celebrate the departed person by the funeral feast called "wake", with the deceased in the room and all mourners drinking to his memory.

Poor father did as he was told and the wedding was of course performed on the island, on the very same terrace above the lake, the one the young people originally selected. Both fathers were accompanying the invisible newlyweds and maids of honour were carrying invisible wedding gown. All went swell except for the end: when the priest asked groom to say his fatal "I do", the embarrassing silence fell all around. Both fathers looked at each other, rather surprised: who forgot that minor detail? Then, just as it was becoming hopeless, the loud "I do" came from the forest above and later again, in girl's voice. The celebration continued. There was a dance, of course, and afterwards, the parting guests praised the father of the bride for the idea to stage those two actors in the forest. He tried to explain to him that he didn't order anybody, but it was hopeless.

I completely forgot our trip and my unfinished story until Christmas, when my wife was sorting some pictures for our album. Excited, she showed me one photo: "Do you remember that young couple you photographed on that Flowerpot Island? They are not here!" I distinctly remembered I took the picture with them and my wife together, but all I could see was her and the forest in the background. I was still wondering about it, when my wife quietly added: "I remember now: she told me her name was Vicky . . ."

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INCLINATIONS: THE GREAT ANIMAL FAIR DISASTER

There was a Toronto musician,
who suffered from extreme ambition:
he wanted to play
at least for one day

at Animal Fair exhibition.

To undertake that noble mission,
the prepared special audition,
and gathered them dense
inside wooden fence,
but didn't charge any admission.

Further this one proposition,
he wrote his own composition.
Introducing culture
into agriculture
he hoped to increase their fruition.

When he took final position
sure of his novel submission,
all animals present
except for one pheasant
waited for music rendition.

He started his exposition.
Contrary to supposition,
production was bummer
- he was only drummer -
causing common admonition.

In order to show opposition,
cows made sudden intermission:
with enormous pleasure
released extra measure
of flatulent gases' emission.

The horses also in addition
broke down the surrounding partition,
galloping indeed
in splendid stampede
and causing extreme demolition.

Quite later the City commission
wrote up detailed deposition
and simply admitted:

"Music wasn't fitted
for animals' art recognition."

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HURONTARIA - 12A/98



Canadian Czech-out Enzine Kanadsko-èeský obèasník.

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Commentary:

I don't like wars because they always tell you whose side you are supposed to be on. Incredible enough, there is one war I have to be on *both sides* - yes, I mean the war between Microsoft and Netscape.

Let me explain: For half a year, I was peacefully creating my Hurontaria, 11 issues times 2 halves times 4 mirrors, which makes about 88 files. I checked them on Billy's *Explorer* (Bill Gates that is, not Clinton) and now I was informed by Bruce Burrell that viewing it from *Netscape*, it did not look the way I described it to him in my letter. So I loaded my cannon - I mean Netscape - and what did I see? Yes, he was right, some text was red, some blue, bold, center aligned, in short the complete nightmare for any webmaster.

I admit it was all my fault, HTML tags must be nested properly and in the right places, probably for the same reason as the notorious *for-next loops*. Explorer was obviously forgiving my errors, Netscape was not. To put the things in order, I apologize to my readers, who were using Netscape. This does not apply for readers with Internet Explorer, they had it O.K. from the very beginning. As a punishment, I decided to correct all my files, which I did. All texts are now black (except for some which are intentionally colored) easy reading and for sharp printing.

What is the moral of this story? Surprisingly, nobody complained to me - they all probably thought that it was the way I intended. In the future, if you have doubts please write them to me: I like reading letters and I love answering them.

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"My wife never leaves for tomorrow what I can do today."

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Webmaster Jan(Honza)
hurychj@hurontel.on.ca

OTHER DIMENSIONS: INTERVIEW WITH JUN ALDAY

JUN ALDAY

kidlat@iname.com

Jun Alday is a Filipino architectural interior consultant-artist based in Hong Kong for over twenty years. Since being first published internationally in the prestigious [Architectural Digest](#) in 1980, his works have graced numerous international and regional magazines. He is included in the book "[100 Designers Favorite Room](#)," 2nd edition by John Pellam and in the book by Paige Rense, "Contemporary Apartments," both published in the U.S.A. He is profiled in Barons (USA) Who's Who of Interior Design 94-95 and was recently selected for publication in the upcoming [Barons Who's](#)

[Who of the World](#), 1999-2000 Global Edition.

Mr. Alday is the man of varied inclinations and interests. His avocations include collecting stamps and [phonecards](#), asian art and antiques, Feng Shui, [silk floral arranging](#), writing, Internet and webpage designing to name a few. His award-winning e-book *Way of Design* was launched in September of 1996. His secondary website [Thai Jataka Paintings](#) which focuses on his collection of Thai traditional paintings is a journey to the mythical and fantastic realms where divinities, fabulous beasts and spirits act out their roles as depicted in the rare temple banners of the 19th century.

NOTE: I hit on Jun's page by accident and I was immediately impressed with the beauty of his pages on home decorating as well as his original idea to publish his interesting book [Way of Design](#) on the Net. I invited him for an interview and in it, he said it all. When you see his works, you have to agree that he is the *artist extraordinaire*.

From: Jun Alday
To: Jan Hurych
Subject: Re: Interview for Hurontaria
Date: July 23, 1998 20:18 h

*"I believe Sharing is the father of the Internet.
Faith, Hope, and Charity are its children."* Jun Alday.

JAN:

Different cultures have different approaches to lifestyle, but there are many things common. In your amazingly interesting book "Way of Design" you mention that the first approach is philosophical - in your case Taoism. How does it help you?

JUN:

Firstly Jan, allow me to thank you for the privilege of speaking in this forum. I feel awe standing amongst the eminent scholars you have so far interviewed in your e-publication.

Taoism's emphasis on intuition and harmony with nature made me look and perceive design from another level -- far from what I have been taught or exposed to earlier in my career. Good proportion, balance, lighting, ventilation, space circulation, selection of colors, furniture, furnishings and accessories are all common considerations but in the East the rationale behind them is distinctly different.

Taoism's manifestations involve the two primary elements the Yin and Yang -- the primeval substance of differentiation. From the Chinese cosmological view, the Yin expresses the negative, round, dark, physical and feminine. The Yang embodies the positive, straight, light, spiritual and masculine. The interplay and harmony of these two elements are the foundation of Feng Shui.

While my interior design may look western, what makes my work oriental is the liberal use of symbolism and metaphors to articulate Feng Shui principles. In the East, both the tangible and intangible aspects of a given space are carefully considered to create an appropriate ambiance for aesthetic and functional comfort.

One big influence to my perception and use of space are the traditional Chinese landscape paintings which are rooted to the concepts of Yin and Yang. My interiors play with solids and voids to produce a movement to the looking eye much like an oriental painting.

JAN:

Many of our readers are "westerners" - their philosophy and tastes may be different. How can they benefit from your book?

JUN:

With the cross cultural exchanges pervasively happening in the Internet and the advent of globalization, more and more people are being aware of Feng Shui and its holistic approach towards lifestyle and interior design in particular. In my e-book, I share with my readers the timeless wisdom of the East as the back-bone to contemporary lifestyle. My western readers benefit by gaining insight to the way oriental design is perceived and implemented.

There are as many theories and schools of Feng Shui as there are so-called experts but I don't subscribe to any one particular dogma as my approach to it is not academic. My art and understanding of Feng Shui (others claim it's a science) is not based on complex or complicated theoretical applications but on intuition, common sense, practicality and above all simplicity. More often than not, what is pleasing to the eye and feels right is good Feng Shui.

JAN:

What made you think about sharing the whole book with readers, to be your own net-publisher? What advantages and drawbacks you can see there?

JUN:

I believe there is always a time and a season and if things are not correctly timed, chances for success are slim. When I wrote Way of Design more than 10 years ago I was not materially motivated. Although some of the publishers were keen to pickup the project, they demanded certain conditions I could not meet. However; to me, writing that book was a cathartic journey and for that alone I am grateful. It was a matter of self-fulfillment more than anything else. I do not see why I cannot now share this journey to the world-at-large gratis when it is very timely and relevant.

"Going on means going far, going far means returning," said Lao Tzu, the ancient Chinese mystic. By looking at my book from another angle, I have given it a new lease of life more than it could ever have accomplished as a hard-bound book. The electronic medium offered me greater flexibility in the presentation of my work by the use of multi-media elements that add to the reading experience and pleasure. It is not flat unlike conventional books. In my e-book, the philosophical thoughts are woven skillfully and subtly as a WHOLE to create depth, movement, pattern and texture to please the eyes and tease the mind.

The numerous letters I have received from all over the world and from all age groups reaffirms my hunch that the world is now receptive to my message. I have gained much as a member of the Internet community and I feel obliged to return in kind. I believe Sharing is the father of the Internet and Faith, Hope, and Charity are its children.

JAN:

I also noticed that you use your professional skills in design of your WEB page - it is really beautiful. What would be your advice to WEB-page designers?

JUN:

Let me point out here that I only touched a computer a little more than 3 years ago when I was forced to acquire one out of necessity -- that is to organize my growing collection of phonecards. I have been technophobic all of my life. Everything I have learned from these past years are all self-taught by trials and errors.

I think it is important for webpage designers to be as simple as possible in their design direction. It is very easy to get carried away by a lot of gimmicks that could make a webpage confusing or overwhelming. I also would recommend the use of light soothing colors and textures to help the readers to relax and more importantly to absorb. I find it

tiring and heavy navigating webpages with black-colored backgrounds for long periods and I invariably leave the site. Lastly, I would recommend attention to font sizes and margins.

JAN:

Thank you very much on behalf of our readers and let me wish you success in your endeavours.

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LIFE: THE LAST DEFENESTRATION

Review of the book "On Leaving Prague Window" by David Brierley

It is known that he lived in Canada, Great Britain and finally settled in France - and I bet he also lived, at least for a short time, in Czech Republic. Brierley's thriller "On Leaving Prague Window" is the clear proof of it, so well he knows his Czechs and their life.

As the name suggests, somebody in Prague fell from the window. It was not for the first time, *the defenestration*, i.e. throwing somebody out of the window, was a favorite past time in Czech history. The first one which occurred in 15th century started religious wars between Catholics and Hussite protestants and the second one in 17th century is even more famous: it started the infamous 30-year war in Europe. Then there was the assassination of Jan Masaryk by communists in 1948, branded by them as a suicide, which is also shortly mentioned in this book.

The year is 1991, two years after *Prague Velvet Revolution* and the hero of the book is the priest Alois Fulnek, somehow resembling Father Brown, the famous sleuth created by G.K.Chesterton. Fulnek has Brown's meekness but not his innocence, as the book explains later. Because of that he ends up in the situation when his fate has to be decided by his superiors. In the meantime, his memories take him to the place where he studied and later, when communists turned their seminary into prison, he was also jailed with the other priests.

At the nearby cemetery, Fulnek meets Milena Pøerova, the girlfriend of Vaclav Bodnár, the newspaper reporter, who died under suspicious circumstances. Milena is searching for his unmarked grave and if possible, even for some clues regarding his death or shall we say, murder. How and why would Fulnek help Helena is of course the question he has to answer for himself.

Don't expect however, that he solves the case by the force of Holmesian logic, as did

father Brown. By definition, the thriller is a book of suspense and action - and let me assure you that you find enough of both in Brierley's book. Fulnek gets mixed up in situations, where only way to get him out alive is in the hands of omnipotent author. I have to admit that even during several visits in Prague I haven't met any similar adventures, but of course I was never in right place in right time. I believe however, that after reading the book, some paranoia may tempt the reader "to look frequently behind his back", to quote *The Sunday Telegraph*. *The Observer* places the author at the same level with Le Carré and *The New Yorker* says the book is "tough and witty". All I have to add is that the author knows - for a foreigner - situation in Czech Republic extremely well. There are also the hints on "lustration" (political rehabilitation) as well as corruption (before and after the Velvet). Even more, he knows the City of Prague - he leads us unmistakably around and frequently, he made me realize small details I almost forgot like the place that really IS to the left of the bridge and so on.

Author obviously likes the quarter od *Mala Strana* (Little Town) - he dealt with it in another of his books, "*The Czech-mate*", the title of which being the obvious pun involving one Czech girl, the heroin of that book. Some section in his new book sound familiar: ". . .*Call me Alois, he said. The name Lojza filled him with horror. . .*" sometimes funny: ". . . *this is the statue of St. Francis. His birds still love him - look at his white hair. . .*" or even ironical: ". . . *the uniforms of the presidential guards, that would do honor to opera buffo . . .*". Brierley can even laugh at his Englishmen. At the dinner in restaurant named "The Three Ostriches" one English fellow claims it is the first time he eats ostrich and is politely informed that is only a duckling.

What appears at the beginning as a recreational reading suddenly turns - without any warning - into real suspense and after one (or two?) murders and equivalent dose of sex, it ends in surprising climax with quite logical conclusion. That is of course quite in agreement with the definition of thriller and when the author at the end suggests that the adventures of father Fulnek obviously will not end there, we may apparently look forward to continuation.

The book was released in 1995 by Little, Brown (not the father Brown, I hope ?) & Company (London and Toronto). On the cover of the book, we can see the view of Prague, as it may be seen (how else?) by somebody, who is falling from the Prague window . . .

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SHORT STORY: THE REVIVAL

Among Canadian teachers, there are many enthusiasts for poetry and Miss Perkins was

no exception. Her admiration however could sometimes lead to unexpected results, the proof of which is this incredible story . . .

It all happened last year, when she picked up for her students the subject of their project in Canadian literature. Which subject? Well, what else than the famous poem from the time of the Canadian Gold Rush, *The Cremation of Sam McGee*, by Robert E. Service.

Sam McGee was born in Tennessee and when he went to find his luck in Klondike, he suffered terribly from low temperatures over there. Beside that, he also had a fictitious idea that the cold would eventually get him and kill him dead. "In such case," he said to Robert, "I can't stand the idea I will be burried in some frozen grave. Promise me, " he asked his friend, " that you will cremate me instead." Well, our poet really didn't have too much of a choice, so he assured Sam he would do as he asked him. Actually, he didn't even believe there would be ever any need for it.

Not long after that, Sam's premonition turned into reality and then it was Robert's turn to keep his promise. There was of course one big problem: Sam died during their trip, half way to Dawson City and there was no wood around for funeral pyre. And so they carried on, Robert and Sam who was firmly fixed to their dog sled, on and on through the polar ice and snow. It was O.K. during the day, but pretty spooky during the nights: Robert sitting by the fire, northern lights above and his dogs howling the funeral song for poor Sam.

After several days, the morbid caravan reached the lake Lebarge, where Robert spotted some old shipwreck, the barge called Alice May, frozen in the ice. This is the right place, decided Rob and put Sam in the boat's cabin, piled some boards around him, lit the fire and closed the door. For a while, he peacefully watched the black smoke coming from the cabin. Then curiosity won over and he opened the door again, but couldn't believe his eyes: among the flames was Sam, alive and extremely happy. When he spotted Rob, he laughed: "I'm telling you, since I left Tennessee, I never felt so warm!"

Well, we adults can understand that the poet was joking, but tell it to kids, who don't see where the reality ends and the fantasy begins. One of them, Robbie, actually doubted it happened as it was told in the poem. "It can't be," he told his friend Barry, "you cannot defrost the frozen man back to life!"

Barry, who felt more informed, claimed that they already freeze people in California

and they do believe they can revive them later.

"I know all about that," proclaimed Robbie and in order to be even, he added:" but it has to be done slowly and certainly not by direct fire."

"On the contrary," argued Barry,"if it is done slowly, the body will start to rot. It has to be done quickly! "

"Quickly?" laughed Robbie. "Why, you can only roast him crisp!"

The boys carried on arguing and it almost ruined their friendship. Then suddenly, Barrie got an idea: " Let's place a one dollar bet and do the experiment with some frozen animal to find out who is the winner. " Both immediately agreed.

The first problem was rather obvious: where could they find out some frozen animal? Barry suggested to catch the cat and lock her in freezer, but Robbie was against it, since the cat belonged to his sister Flora. "Besides," he said, "the animal must be frozen 'naturally' ". Eventually, they found a frozen rabbit, who somehow escaped the attention of local fox. The opportunity for experiment offered itself the very same afternoon when Robbie's parent left for town.

The easiest thing was to find the substitute for the barge: the nearby dog-house was fitting well for the rabbit's size. The only problem was their dog Bonnie, who was chained to it. She was Robbie's good friend - the only living creature on the farm he could sincerely talk about his problems at school and elsewhere. Moreover, the other end of the chain was nailed to the dog-house. Fortunately, the chain was long enough for them to tie the dog by it's collar to the nearby tree, by their judgement far enough from the fire.

They put the frozen rabbit inside the dog-house, pile some wood around it and lit the fire. The wood however was wet and the fire was smouldering with dense, white smoke. Barry, disappointed, claimed that smoke described in the poem was definitely black, otherwise the rabbit resurrection might not work. They looked around and found a barrel with some used oil, so they filled the jar and poured it all over the dog-house. The fire blew upwards with such force that both boys started to run away and so did Bonnie, who broke from the tree and was now free. Not free from the chain however, nor from the attached dog-house, which dutifully followed her wherever she went.

Looking for the shelter, she found the nearby barn, but when there, she realized that the burning dog-house was chasing her all the same. She run out into open and finally ended in the creek, where the chain got stuck under the boulder, something broke and

she was finally and really free. Her dog-house was still burning for some time before it was extinguished by the water. At that time however the barn was also in the fire, that started from the burning hay on the floor. Barrie and Robbie were watching the fire from the distance; there was nothing they could do. The fire was of course much bigger than the bonfires their parents used to make on Canada Day celebrations.

The neighboring farmer saw the fire from the distance and called the firemen, but before they got there the barn was almost burnt to ground. Still, the TV crew got few shots of hot ashes which appeared appeared in the regional and even in the provincial television. Local town newspapers printed few commentaries and articles, which differed in their opinions, depending on the group of population their authors belonged to. They all however agreed on one thing: we all have to be more safety conscious and watchful.

The newspapers were selling well and information media had their heyday. Not so for the boys: there were severely reprimanded and Robbie's parents are still negotiating with the insurance company, claiming that their dog is actually a natural disaster. Tired from defending her innocence, Miss Perkins eventually promised to her school principal that she would be more careful and never ever incite her students to dangerous experiments. The only fire she was later guilty of, was the one that consumed the heart of the teacher of mathematics, which was harmless enough.

On the bright side, there were two participants who actually gained from this disaster. First one was the poet himself: when the boys later searched the dog-house, it was empty. Barry of course said that the rabbit came to life and run away. Robbie on the other hand, claimed that the rabbit simply burned to cinders. That of course made sense, since he would otherwise lose his bet. Barry however wanted a proof that the ashes really belonged to the rabbit and so the friends are still arguing about it. Nothing was resolved and the poem will forever intrigue the readers with its mystery, which could please Robert E. Service tremendously.

The other benefit went to Bonnie. Should the boys take their time, they would find her under an old tractor, happy and smiling with satisfaction. In front of her, there was a small pile of singed rabbit hair . . .

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INCLINATIONS: COMPUTER ASSISTED POETRY II.

THE TRAVEL

travellers on the subway
chase future across the city
they spend a lot of time in sidewalk cafes
hating to dress up
they play their games
and you've been there before

THE POKER PLAYERS

men who want to join you
look like mannequins
they play poker in the back room
no matter what you say
you wake feeling tired
and it breaks your heart to discover
that pain and pleasure are the same

AN OLD PHOTOGRAPH

people who cannot lie
have heard about you
don't give them your real name
suddenly
someone hands you an old photograph
that makes you cry
yes, you can run but you can't hide

THE SEASAW

old men brag about themselves
they look like the faces in your dreams
they have all the clues
drink until dawn
the lilac walls smell of mildew
but answers were here all that time
and you can't turn your back on them

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HURONTARIA - 13A/98



Canadian Czech-out Webzine Kanadsko-český oběasník.

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Commentary:

You may still remember the interview I had with **Jeffrey R. Harrow** from *Digital*, in our Issue No.9. Well, now you can also hear him in *Real Audio*. Just hit his page <http://www.digital.com/rcfoc> and there you can find how to do it. You do not have Real Audio program? No problem, you can load it from there too and for free! Also, you get detailed instructions how to get it all together. Of course you also need a sound card in your PC or Mac and a pair of speakers too. You can then listen to Jeff's interesting lectures and articles - and believe me, there is something for everybody who is interested in computers and digital world (and *Digital* too, pardon the pun).

Thanks to my friend Jerry Bujas from Scarborough, I am now also listening to Czech Radio in Real Audio. You find their three stations on http://www.radio.cz/cesky_rozhlas/index.html. For somebody who used to tune to it on short waves only it is just a dream come through. For anybody, who couldn't even receive it properly on SW band - like us in Northern Canada - it is a miracle of modern technology.

With Real Audio, you get also a number of preset stations for music, talk shows and news - actually some of them even in video, like CNN and others. And do not forget, those marked CBC are Canadian stations. So listen and listen good!

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Note: Part B is in Czech, and the content is different. For Part B, please go back to [Title Page](#).



"My wife can't forget the day we met for the first time - however hard she may try . . ."

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OTHER DIMENSIONS: INTERVIEW WITH JOHN HOOD-WILLIAMS

JOHN HOOD-WILLIAMS
J.HoodWilliams@gre.ac.uk

is currently a Senior Lecturer working in the Department of Social Science at the University of Greenwich in London, England. He was educated at the University of London and did post graduate studies at the Institute of Education in the Department of Sociology. He is the author of book s and articles published in England, America and Germany. He is also well known for having written widely on children and on Family life in works that are read throughout Europe, America and Australia. His writings cover a diverse range of interests including studies on suicide, domestic violence and children's comics. Throughout all of these works there is the continuing struggle to understand the relations between women and men -which the social sciences speak of in the terms 'sex' and 'gender'. For th e last five years he has been working, and publishing, with a colleague, Wendy Cealey Harrison, on new solutions to problems of sex/ gender. His web page at <http://www.gre.ac.uk/~j.hoodwilliams> is extremely popular and has

generated over 15,000 visitors in the last year alone.

Some of his books and publications:

Hood-Williams, J. (1992) Families, Nelson, London (with D. Leonard). ISBN 0174385005. 207 pages.

Hood-Williams, J. Mundy, G. & Stuart, D. (1996) Skills & Reasoning for the Social Sciences, Greenwich University Press, Dartford. ISBN 1 874529 90 6. 316 pages.

Hood-Williams, J. (1995a) 'Sexing the Athletes' in Sociology of Sport Journal (12) 3 pp 290-305. ISSN 0741-1235.

Hood-Williams, J. (1995b) 'Domestic Violence on a London Housing Estate' in Home Office Research & Statistics Department Research Bulletin No. 37 pp 11-18. ISSN 0962-0478. (with Bush, T.)

Hood -Williams, J. (1996a) 'Goodbye to Sex & Gender' in Sociological Review No 1. Vol 44. pp. 1-16. ISSN 0038-0261.

Hood-Williams, J. (1996b) 'Studying Suicide' in Health & Place Vol. 2, No.3 pp 167-177. ISSN 1353-8292.

Hood-Williams, J. (1997b) 'Stories for Sexual Difference' in British Journal of Sociology of Education Vol. 18. No.1. pp. 81-99. ISSN 0142-5692.

Hood-Williams, J. (1997c) 'Gender, Bodies & Discursivity: Comment on Hughes & Witz' in Body & Society Vol. 3. No.4. pp. 103-124. ISSN 1357-034X. (Written with Wendy Cealey Harrison).

Hood-Williams, J. (1998a) 'Trouble with Gender' in Sociological Review Vol. 46. No.1. pp. 73-94. ISSN 0138-0261, (Written with Wendy Cealey Harrison)

Hood-Williams, J. (1998b) 'More Varieties than Heinz. A Comment on Humphries' Response to Hammersley' in Sociological Research Online Vol. 3. No.1.(Written with Wendy Cealey Harrison), <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/socresonline/3/1/?html>

Not all of his many publications can be listed here but many of them are available at his web page at <http://www.gre.ac.uk/~j.hoodwilliams> together with full details of their location in printed journals. The following interview is related to a series of publications that have appeared since 1995 on sex and gender.

From: John Hood-Williams
To: Jan Hurych
Subject: Re: interview for Hurontaria
Date: August 02, 1998

JAN:

Your article "Goodbye to Sex and Gender" (published in Sociological Review Vol 44 No. 1, February 1996) brings new insight into the problems caused by separation of terms "sex" and "gender". While there is a peculiarity in English language (the word "sex" meaning sexual "polarity" and sexual act as well), other languages - as far as I know - may have two distinct expressions for sex and sexual act. Some have even accepted the foreign word "sex" in both its meanings, besides the word in native language (sometimes even meaning "genitals" as well). It is my opinion that "gender" had originally its place only in formal categorization, such as in grammar e.t.c. The meaning assigned to it nowadays was probably a mere attempt to capture some other attributes of the word "sex". I can see that it did some good, but now it seems to be rather superficial, too. Do we really need to distinguish sex from gender and where do we go from here?

JOHN:

You may be right when you say that it is only English that collapses the two meanings of 'sex' in that one word. But English also offers us the related term, 'sexuality', which I agree is used more distinctly in, for example, the equivalent French and German. Sex and sexuality are cognate terms so English is not entirely eccentric to link them together. However, the more interesting observation is that 'gender' is a peculiarly English word. More accurately we would say that gender, in its modern sense, is a peculiarly Anglo-Saxon term that has purchase in America and in Britain but which has little resonance in any of the Romance languages. For example there seems to be no equivalent of the modern term 'gender' in Italian although it may be being imported in to that language. You are right to point out that gender had been a grammatical term. It was perhaps first used in its modern sense - as social characteristics of men and women - by the American John Money and there is a debate about whether the idea of gender (if not the term itself) dates back to the Enlightenment or perhaps a little later. But it was not a 'mere attempt...' It has been very important politically as a weapon to fight biological reductionisms that operated against women.

Do we really need to distinguish sex from gender? Sex/gender, which has also come to denote not just a distinction but a problematic - that is a relatively coherent collection of ideas - constitutes, at least in Britain, an impediment to thought. The central assumptions of that problematic are worth rehearsing. First, sex/gender repeats the long standing distinction between nature/culture that besets so much of our thinking. It seems absolutely commonsensical to believe that there are two distinct and unified realms nature (sex) and culture (gender) and that these two meet and interact one with the other. But actually the real difficulty is knowing what is which. When I am teaching my students I ask them whether the body of Arnold Schwarzenegger, the walk of Marilyn Monroe or the height of post war Japanese youth is the product of culture or nature.

Nature/culture is a sterile opposition that leads to endless, repeated, irresolvable disputes about the origin of everything from intelligence to homosexuality. In sex/gender two things need to be said. First, that the distinction brings with it philosophical assumptions in which sex, the natural biological phenomena, has a special truth, hardness and realness whereas gender, the cultural phenomenon, has a more chimerical, shifting, changing, ideological, quality. But just because something is a cultural product does not mean that it can easily be changed and, by contrast the body itself - as post operative transsexuals illustrate - seems remarkably malleable. Second the truth of sex is that it is a binary. Now it is absolutely anti-common-sense to question this. Is it not obvious that men are men and women are women and that biology clearly tells us that this is so? In one sense yes but things are not quite so straightforward. We now have, for example, some wonderful histories of sex that teach us that the Barber surgeons of the Renaissance - who certainly knew about bodies, who cut them up, who performed surgical operations in theatres in front of an audience - believed that there was just one sex. There were variations around that one sex and men were the more perfect form but one can easily follow the view that saw the vagina as an interior penis, the labia as foreskin, the ovaries as testicles and so on - especially now when we know so much more about developmental embryology.

This history, together with contemporary events such as the trouble that the Olympic Committee has in sexing female athletes, enables us to say that sex *is* gender. That is that sex -and here I must speak in the terms of the binary that I am trying to escape from - also has its cultural component; that sex is a way in which the body is represented and that this 'way' must obviously be cultural. And this involves saying, more widely, that the body *is* the way that it is represented or to put it more appropriately, the way in which it is discursively appropriated, whether that be through the experimental procedures of surgery, the drawings of modern anatomy, the images in a spectron microscope or in the gaze of a lover. What else could it be? The very terms sex and gender have therefore become very slippery and interchangeable in modern thought. And the question for me has become, why should we retain them at all in the old acception?

Sex/gender is also a fundamentally incoherent problematic. For example it believes two quite contradictory things. It believes that gender (the social characteristics of men and women) are caused by sex (their anatomical differences). But if sex causes gender, if one is always the product of the other so that we constantly speak of sex/gender and we thereby never really separate them why have a concept of gender at all? On the other hand if we say gender is not caused by sex but that it is an autonomous term that should be used only to refer to social characteristics which are distinct, what would gender be 'about'? How could we speak about 'masculinity' in a way that sees it as entirely

disconnected from 'male'? That makes no sense either.

The social scientists of gender have really performed a trick. They pretend they are very interested in gender. So great is this trick that in Britain one now hears people asking, 'What is the gender of your new born baby?' It seems that everyone is tuned in to gender. But actually gender is everywhere and nowhere. In fact social scientists typically display no interest in gender in their work - especially in their empirical work. If they study differences in mathematical ability - to take one example from hundreds of possible variables - they simply look at the children and determine that they are boys and girls. And then they say girls are good at computational skills but bad at geometry. But, if we are using the language of sex/gender, this is not a gender difference; it is a sex difference. If social science was really interested in gender it would have to look at those children - *boys and girls* - who were feminine and then study their mathematical abilities. To do so would be corrosive of the assumption that femininity runs through women like writing through rock and may have certain political consequences too. (I am leaving aside for the moment the fact that in all these endless comparisons between the sexes the *differences* within the sexes and the *overlaps* between the sexes are ignored. In England, for example, an unfortunate majority of children have poor computational and geometrical skills quite regardless of their sex/gender).

So the terms sex and gender and the whole problematic of sex/gender is in a terrible mess. My own approach is to argue for a way of looking at the world that measures the relevance - and the irrelevance - of sex/gender in specific situations. I say, let us not assume that what we are looking at here is sex or gender or is a product of sex or gender. It may be. It may not be. If you assume it to be so you will certainly find that it is so. Let us now deny these two terms their place in the great meta-narratives of Western thought and to examine their precise discursive deployments. If we do that we will find that sometimes sex/gender has no place, no relevance and also sometimes that it has the old guise of a general structure, a coherent category. I give some examples of what is meant by this approach in my recent papers -especially those developed and authored jointly with my co-worker Wendy Cealey Harrison.

JAN:

In Darwin's theory of evolution - and especially in very interesting books of neo-Darwinist R.Dawkins - both sexes and their DNA's have very important and COMPLEMENTARY functions in evolution process. While the need for two sexes is obvious (creating the pool of combinations and permutations), the details of the first appearance of sexes in the evolution process are not so well known. The biological function is no doubt the primary purpose of sexes and the other, sex-specific functions be it psychological and/or sociological appeared more or less only later as human

society developed. What is, according to you, the role of sexes in modern society and how does it change with time?

JOHN:

I am extremely suspicious of evolutionary biology and I regret its growing influence in psychology and elsewhere. It seems to me that as that influence develops psychologists increasingly retreat from their real tasks and hand explanation over to a fanciful metaphor. There is so much talk of Darwin in this context but my sense is that such people have never read Darwin and certainly that they do not understand him (although presumably this cannot apply to Dawkins who I'm afraid I have never read. I would recommend Stephen Jay Gould on Darwin). I will write about this in the future.

JAN:

While similarities and differences between sexes are very well studied, the studies of complementary functions were so far not in the center of interest. If our goal is the harmony between sexes, we should do better than that. Isn't it contradictory, to stress their differences and the same time worship the family as a basis of our society?

JOHN:

I think your remarks about complementary functions are interesting in the context of the sex/gender problematic. Given the assumptions of that problematic in which sex always operated as a kind of material base to the superstructure of gender, one might ask why has sex only been taken up as an indicator of similarity and difference and not also in terms of complementarity or perhaps even in other ways too. But your question comes from within the sex/gender problematic and for me, of course, that is its difficulty. If, like me, you do not believe that the sexes constitute a coherent group then the idea of a general harmony or disharmony between them does not arise. My proposal is also that we do not conceive of any general relationship between sex and gender whether of difference, complementarity or similarity. I don't believe a study of any kind of biological function provides any necessary consequences for society. Of course we know that, theoretically, it takes just one man (if he be fertile) to impregnate a woman (if she be fertile) and she may (given the right conditions) give birth to a live baby that may (given the right conditions) grow to adulthood.. And often such biological facts are woven in to an argument in support of 'the family' (in practice a highly disparate set of social relationships) but there is no necessity for it to be so. We could imagine a society (perhaps a pre-historical society) which had no concept of 'sex' but which was able to reproduce itself through random acts of copulation. This might sound overly sociologistic but in the present climate it is necessary to speak like this.

Since you raise this point about the family I would like to remark about the more general political implications of our discussion. Research - including the kind of conceptual research that we have been considering here - does not have a straightforward relationship to politics. When I say that sex/gender and gender is in a mess this does not mean that in some contexts gender might not still be a vitally important political weapon. One can see that in say, Palestine, it may be very useful for women to insist on the separation of gender from sex as part of a political struggle for their own liberation. I notice that in recent discussions in a conference in Rome discussing the establishment of a permanent court for war crimes the delegates from Islamic countries had a problem with 'gender'. There is no equivalent word in Arabic and it was translated as 'type of sex'. This meant that countries might be signing up to an agreement that could try them for outlawing homosexuality which is something that worried the Azerbaijani delegation for example.

Now this translation of gender - 'a type of sex' - is extremely interesting and raises a host of questions that I cannot go in to here. Sex, gender and sexuality are cognate terms with troublesome relationships to each other. It is said that the Vatican has worries about 'gender' based on a fear that it might replace a binary division between men/women with a five way split between bisexuals, homosexual men/women, heterosexual men/women. In this fear the relationship between gender and sexual object choice is again illustrated. There seems little grounds for the Pope's fears but whatever is the case the politics of recent studies of gender must be decided in another court.

JAN:

The balanced roles of sexes were seriously shattered by successful cloning of sheep Dolly: the one conclusion which was intentionally played down was that there was no father. With systematic cloning and genetic engineering (that is by building DNAs like jigsaw puzzles) the role of two sexes will be substantially changed - while mothers and their eggs will be still in demand, one can hardly say the same about males. True, we may never see it happen, because we already have some laws against human cloning, but we also have laws against stealing - and plenty of thieves as well. One reason may be that cloning, if properly handled, can help to develop many useful features, or so they say. When they start "the evolution in lab", it would be difficult to stop them. Couldn't this create, at least theoretically, some imbalance between number of males and females and also change the social roles of sexes? After all, there already were societies where the role of sexes and their quantities were artificially suppressed.

JOHN:

Dolly the sheep - as technology - probably means nothing to us in this context. Dolly is

an identical twin nothing more. As for the possible social deployments of the technology that is a different question but, the balance between the sexes, as you suggest, has historically been affected by many things -infanticide, migration, war and so on. Your speculations remind me of the early feminist writer, Shulamith Firestone, who believed women could only be freed when the technology to overcome their biology was developed. Someone could say the opposite and argue that men's domination is a social matter and is not explained by, or caused by, anything in nature. And then we are back again to this unhelpful binary that I have been discussing here. So I say let us not think about general realms having general characteristics, operating across a binary divide that meet like the two banks of a river. Let us think about discontinuity, specificity and rather than read off gender from little more than our presumption that it is there, let us begin again with clear eyes.

JAN:

Thank you very much on behalf of our readers and let me wish you success in your endeavours.

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LIFE: I ASKED FOR IT

No, I do not want to complain or look for excuses. I asked for it, I got it. I am talking about my interviews on the Net and let me tell you, I am glad I asked for it . . .

As a young boy, I always had some impertinent questions - or they seemed to be, because I was not getting any answers. My parents, my teachers, my friends, even my boss, they all refused to commit themselves to decent answers. I couldn't imagine why. It can't be, I told myself, there must be a way how to make people talk.

Needless to say, I have found the reason for their silence: I had simply asked wrong people. You see, there are no stupid questions, only stupid answers. If you want to get right answer, ask the right people. Ask experts! I tried it and the situation changed drastically: I have found people who not only answered my questions, they even liked answering them! And they were all nice, friendly and patient. Yes, when you read some of my questions, you may doubt 'where on earth they come from'. Let me put you at ease: they all popped up in my head. All it needed was a little bit of thinking and large amount of alcohol - not for inspiration, just for getting enough courage to ask them out loud . . .

It all started with one bet: my friend challenged me that I would not write to certain

famous person, ask him few questions and - what's more important - that I would surely not receive any answers. Well, my friend lost, but I won more than one bet. I repeated the feat again and again, first for webzine *Amberzine*, then for *Hurontaria* and guess what, people liked it too. Soon I became more daring and inquiring. *E-mail interview* - whoever heard about that before? As an inventor of many things that did not work, I was pleased one of them did.

Why did it work? Not because I am a nice and polite fellow (oh yes, I could be!), but evidently there were some other forces in play. You guessed it, the main trick was the Internet. I was simply picking experts with their own WEB pages, people I suspected would like answering questions, even my kind of questions. People who knew how important is to publish something on the Net, people who understood that our world has changed and is still changing. And of course, people who liked to be read, listened to and worked with. People of action. So you can see, it was easy: I also subscribe to that kind of attitude and experts I have interviewed must have felt it in me, I suppose. Many of them became my friends afterwards; we still write to each other and that says it all. Maybe it was because I never asked too many questions, gave them full freedom of expression and never ever commented their answers. I find that policy not only fair but rather smart as well. After all, they did it for free and I owe them my gratitude. Let me thank to all of them sincerely and profoundly.

The reactions of *Amberzine* and later *Hurontaria* readers were highly positive. They all appreciated the honest and qualified answers - we do not get too many of them nowadays. As far as the subjects of my interviews, I picked them by random, but only those that would interest our readers and inform them about the frontiers of our thinking. To all of them and especially to those who wrote me, I have to thank as well. After all, what good would be a transmitter without any receiver?

Many readers were asking how am I doing it. Well, it takes a lot of magic - but seriously folks, there is nothing to it: just pick the right person and ask him/her right questions. Do not forget to make your questions unique and entertaining, if possible. Entertaining for yourself as well because, as you might have guessed, it steals a lot of time from you and it really helps if you love doing it.

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SHORT STORY: JOHNNY ANGEL

(First published in Czech, Neviditelný Pes, Prague)

One day, my parents happily announced to me that I was going to have a little brother or sister - and who would I prefer? I said truthfully I would rather have a bicycle, but they

didn't care and some time later a little thing appeared in our house and IT was crying and crying. My dad said: "Here is your little brother, Johnny, and be nice to him." They called IT Freddie, but I didn't care for it because for me it was just IT.

At the very beginning, IT was O.K., laying in the crib, but later IT stood up on IT's own legs, just about the time I started to go to school. Whenever she was leaving our house, my mom told me: "Johnnie, you have to play with Freddie until I come back," and I had to take care of IT. Not only I couldn't spend any time reading my favorite books, I had to watch over IT so IT would not roll down the stairs or fall out of the window. IT was also destroying my homework, tearing the sheets from my notebook. IT was just like a little pest, believe me.

My parents didn't care about my troubles, they were both just too crazy about IT. They pampered IT and hugged IT like a puppy or something. When IT grew bigger, I gave IT a slap or two when nobody was watching. IT started to cry however, my parents came and were mad at me. You see, IT was always pointing IT's finger at me and squealed on me. At the end, my mom had to take me to old doc Nicolson. I could not understand why; it was not me who needed a doctor, it was IT! My mom was consulting with him and when she later came out of doc's office, she said to me: "Johnnie, *be an angel* - you cannot torture your little brother all the time, it is not nice. Promise me you will be a good boy, promise me!" She was crying when she was saying that. I felt sorry for her even when I knew she does not love me any more, that she now loved IT. I promised her I would be nice to IT because I hated to see her cry. And really, when IT got mad I just smiled peacefully and when IT spilled something on my homework, I even patted IT in the head.

Then it happened: one morning I felt something protruding from my back, something which looked like two bumps. Not even my dad could figure out what could it possibly be and my mom said it had probably something to do with my growth. And growing it was, bigger and bigger. So back we went to doc Nicolson. He was shaking his old head for a while and suggested it might be something like a siamese twin. He prescribed some pills for me and said: "We shall see." And we did see, because it grew happily in spite of his medicine. It was already giving me troubles when I was dressing and it was painful especially when IT was pulling at my lumps.

They started to look more like stumps however and few days later, I was not able to hide them any more. My mom tried to tape them to my back with some band-aid, but it still looked rather big and the kids in school started to shout at me: "Humpback, humpback!" Some white hair appeared on it, which later turned into real feathers. Yes, the whole thing looked pretty much like a pair of wings, which grew and grew. Eventually, I had to stay permanently at home, but I didn't mind that part too much to

tell you the truth. When my wings reached the size of those on the picture of archangel Gabriel in St. John's cathedral, my parents decided it was time again to see doc Nicolson.

They were consulting with him even longer than before and then he called me in alone and said: "Johnny, I think you have overdone it a little bit with all that goodness. We cannot operate on you, it is too risky and there is no remedy for what is happening. You cannot hide it under your jacket either, but maybe we can try something else. Stop being a good boy now, that's all. Maybe in time it will stop growing and later, with a little bit of luck, it may even shrink. But promise me one thing: you mustn't tell anybody about my advice, not even to your parents - it must be our secret. I told them I would give you something, so take these pills, they are harmless and see me in two weeks."

I have to admit I took doc's advice with some kind of satisfaction. Then I turned bad again: when IT fell down, I didn't help IT up on IT's feet, I didn't even warn IT about the slippery pavement. I simply ignored IT. And would you believe it, my wings really stopped growing. They even started to shrink, little by little. To help it more, I gave IT a punch here and there and then some more. It worked: my wings became winglets again and my feathers started to fall off. Encouraged, I punched IT even more, without any reason. And when my parents went to see movies or so, I was locking IT in the cellar and threatened IT with revenge, should IT ever squealed again.

During the next few days even the stumps disappeared completely. I jumped with joy until I realized that two little bumps appeared on the top of my head. They looked like little horns and were promising to grow into sizeable peaks. I immediately stopped being bad and behaved like a good boy again. It did stop their growth, but they refused to get smaller. Being afraid my parents might notice that, I visited doc Nicolson again, this time alone.

"Dear Johnny," said good old doctor to me, "you have overdone it again, now in the other direction. I am afraid we cannot turn it back any more. On the bright side, we can see they stopped growing. Those are rather small bumps, you would be surprised how many people have them. Just be sure you will be a good boy from now on so they will not start growing again. You do not want to end with some heavy antlers. I will talk to your parents and tell them it's something like wisdom teeth and they shouldn't worry."

And so he did. They were both very happy with his explanation and my dad even praised old doc who - according to him - "can explain things so clearly that everybody can understand them". He then turned to me and said: "After all, Johnny, this is much better than wings. And if you behave, I am sure that Santa Claus will bring you for Christmas a brand new sheepskin hat, the one they sell at Bay's - nice, big and warm . .

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INCLINATIONS: THE OLD COACH ROAD

in summer days
we walk our maze
old road by river bend
runs from no place
and has no end

there I lay down
my ear to ground
first I hear nothing
then some sound
they´re passing

hoofs pounding
and loud rumbling
of the wheels
and something tumbling
axes squeals

they´re just passing . . .

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HURONTARIA - 14A/98



Canadian Czech-out Webzine Kanadsko-český občasník.

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Commentary:

I have received a letter from Mrs. Gita Hanikýrová (Louisville, Kentucky) related to my commentary in Issue 13., promoting Czech stations on Real Audio. She recommends to us also the station **Eldorado** from Budjovice (Budweiss), just click on <http://www.eldorado.cz/>. I tried it and was pleasantly surprised: they play country and western, folk and so called "tramp" songs, both in English and Czech. While it is coming all the way from the overcrowded Europe, there is almost no "Net congestion" type of interruptions there. Gita also recommends to take a look in *Seznam* <http://www.seznam.cz/>, where you can find some other links to Czech radio stations as well.

Mrs. Jitka Splítková is announcing in **Zélos**, a magazine friendly to Hurontaria, the **photo-contest** and ANYBODY can participate with his/her photographs. For details, click on <http://www.muweb.cz/web/zelos/projekt.htm>, you can learn everything right there - all I have to do is just to wish you good luck.

Hurontaria contest: Surely, you noticed in our issues that ironical ape or she-ape (apess?) with his/her impertinent comments. Well, write to us (deadline is the end of October) *what kind (species) of ape it is* (hint: it is not a long-tailed monkey) and we will draw a winner from those who guessed it right. As a reward, the winner may give our ape his/her name of his/her choice. Only the first name, of course, we don't want to be sued . . .

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"TV weather forecast is very accurate except for time and place."

Please send me a mail to my address below; your comments will be appreciated. If you want to receive announcement of the new issue by mail, add the word SUBSCRIBE. We would also appreciate if you let us know where did you learn about Hurontaria.

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OTHER DIMENSIONS: INTERVIEW WITH PETER G. NEUMANN

PETER G. NEUMANN

neumann@csl.sri.com

Peter G. Neumann received AB, SM, and PhD degrees from *Harvard* in 1954, 1955, 1961, respectively, and Dr rerum naturarum, *Technische Hochschule, Darmstadt*, Germany, 1960. He was part of the *Multics* development from 1965-69 while at *Bell Telephone Labs* at Murray Hill NJ throughout the 1960s. In the **Computer Science Laboratory at SRI** since 1971 (where he is now *Principal Scientist*), he has been concerned with computer systems having requirements for security, reliability, human safety, and high assurance (including formal methods). For the *Association for Computing* (ACM), he was founder and Editor of the *SIGSOFT Software Engineering Notes* (1976-1993), and is Chairman of the *ACM Committee on Computers and Public Policy* (since 1985) and Contributing Editor for *CACM* (since 1990) for the monthly 'Inside Risks' column. In 1985 he created, and still moderates, the *ACM Forum on Risks to the Public in the Use of Computers and Related Technology*, which is one of the most widely read of the on-line computer newsgroups. RISKS (comp.risks) provides a medium for discussion of issues relating to all aspects of computers and the social and technological problems that they create.

His RISKS-derived book (**Computer-Related Risks**, Addison-Wesley, 1995) explores the benefits and pitfalls of computer-communication technology and suggests ways of avoiding risks in critical systems. His web page <http://www.CSL.sri.com/neumann.html> includes pointers to *Senate and House testimony* on various subjects, information on accessing the RISKS indexes, and citations for a few of his publications -- including his 1965 paper with Bob Daley on the Multics file system design, and recent writings on system architecture, security, and cryptography. He is a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the ACM, and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (and a member of the Computer Society). He has received the *ACM Outstanding Contribution Award* for 1992, the first *SRI Exceptional Performance Award* for Leadership in Community Service in 1992, the *Electronic Frontier Foundation Pioneer Award* in 1996, the *ACM SIGSOFT Distinguished Service Award* in 1997, and the *CPSR Norbert Wiener Award* for in October 1997, for "deep commitment to the socially responsible use of computing technology."

From: Peter G. Neumann
To: Jan Hurych
Subject: Re: Interview for Hurontaria

Date: September 9, 1998

JAN:

Your excellent Risk Forum Digest (for which you are the moderator) should be a must for everybody who works with computers, be it hardware-software designers or just users. How would you rate the dangers presented by computer errors or faults in comparison with others risks posed by other technologies, like industrial hazards, engineering design errors, pollution, natural disasters, radiation risks, etc. I know that comparison may not be too professional, but is there any other comparisons the public may use?

PETER:

The life-critical cases thus far are predominantly in transportation (particularly aviation and rail travel) and medical applications, although there are also safety and reliability risks in essentially every field in which computers are used for control (such as electrical power and telecommunications). Ironically, national defense is one of the biggest potential victims. In addition, security risks are enormous, and apparently getting worse -- as electronic commerce increases despite the absence of adequate information infrastructures.

In this context, the risks related to computer-communication technology are both quantitatively and qualitatively worse than previously -- primarily because all of the other technologies you cite are increasingly dependent on information technology. This tends to considerably amplify the old risks, while at the same time introducing new risks -- such as those that result from relying solely on computers that fail. For example, there are predictions that the entire U.S. railroad system will fail on New Year's Day in the year 2000 simply because all of the control is now centralized in a single computer center and there are no longer any manual backups. Electric power distribution has been extensively automated, but there is no longer much surplus power to distribute when a crisis occurs. Air-traffic control is using archaic computer systems that fail regularly, despite massive increases in traffic volume. Even ecological controls are dependent on computers. Detection of ozone depletion over the South Pole was delayed for many years because the computer system had been programmed to reject extreme values.

JAN:

Working in computer industry myself, I was witnessing some software errors which, especially in automatic controls, could create hazards to human lives and/or have costly consequences. Unfortunately, those are not easy to predict and some of them are more like time-bombs (example: the Year-2000 problem). What would you recommend for designers to look for -- preferably while their projects are still in design stage?

PETER:

The fundamentals of good software engineering have been well developed over the past thirty years -- one of its most serious contributors has been Professor *David L. Parnas*, at McMaster University. However, those fundamentals are largely ignored in the practice of developing systems. The Year-2000 Problem is a poignant example of an incredible lack of foresight on the part of almost everyone. I was part of the Multics effort that began in 1965, and we clearly foresaw the Y2K problem and

solved it very nicely at that time. Incidentally, the Y2K problem has become the 700-pound gorilla that is masking the deeper problems in software system development. Large system efforts are too often cancelled, subject to massive cost overruns, or unable to live up to their expectations.

Much greater effort should be devoted to system designs that are defensive and anticipatory, and to system implementations that are highly disciplined. Life-critical and economy-critical systems should not be the work of amateurs and untrained professionals. Perhaps most important is reading and understanding everything that has gone wrong in the past and trying not to make the same mistakes again and again. The Risks Forum indexes <http://catless.ncl.ac.uk/Risks/> and my book *Computer-Related Risks*, Addison-Wesley, 1995] are good places to start. Addison-Wesley has a Web page that provides ongoing access to new material, rather than my continually trying to update the book. [Search for the book title on <http://www.awl.com/>]. There's also lots more on my Web site <http://www.csl.sri.com/neumann/>.

JAN:

The most important of course is the test stage. Software testing however is still an open chapter, namely because one cannot check all states and combinations of the variables. Also, the static testing (state by state) cannot be a substitute for the real operation, which is dynamic, prone to noise and other random variables. What is your advice in such case?

PETER:

You have hit the nail on the head. Testing is intrinsically incomplete. Worse yet, the system requirements are usually incomplete in the first place, and the models used for analysis are also. Again, there is no substitute for good software engineering. In addition, for really critical components of really critical systems, formal methods are finally becoming practical. [Our Web site <http://www.csl.sri.com/sri-csl-fm.html> pointers to many ongoing efforts in this area.]

JAN:

Some risks are created by the magnifying effect of software on hardware. On the other hand, good hardware kind of protection can complement software safeguards (say mechanical end-switches etc.), namely because its high reliability and predictability. Do you think we can still make some progress there? On the other hand, even in PCs there is a trend to use software more and more for replacement of simple manual operations, say CRT switching etc, which creates new kind of failures and destructions. What would be the rule there?

PETER:

Today's mass-market hardware is not really appropriate for use in life-critical applications. For example, there is inadequate attention to security, reliability, and availability. However, because the system software is so bad (particularly in those specific respects), the inadequacies of the hardware are almost irrelevant. Certainly, special-purpose hardware can do wonderful things, but the marketplace does not really encourage that to happen anymore.

< B>JAN:

Thank you very much on behalf of our readers and let me wish you success in your endeavours.

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LIFE: FREE DISPOSAL

(First published in Neviditelny Pes, Prague)

Sometimes I get upset, sometimes even a little bit mad - but let me explain. I was moving back to Ontario and was faced with the usual problem: the disposal of used furniture. Atia, my wife, already left Saskatoon several months before and most of our furniture followed by container. Myself, I had to stay behind because of my work, so I left the rented house and moved into a small apartment and took with me the old stuff: captain's bed, folding sofa and an armchair, called Lazy Boy (not necessarily after me).

"You get rid of it very easy," assured me my wife. "You can give it to our former neighbour Andy, he'd be glad to take it from you. And if that does not work, there is also the Shelter for Battered Women."

As the critical day approached, I called Andy, who was not particularly interested, but he had a friend who was. After several days, they started his old truck, but they only succeeded to brake the transmission. "Never mind," said Andy, "I will get another gearbox." He got one, but in the meantime his friend changed his mind and was not interested in my furniture any more.

I started to feel that the situation was approaching the level of national disaster and decided to call the army. The Salvation Army, that is. "The collection in your area is scheduled for Saturday next week," said the girl on the phone. "Be sure that the furniture is in good shape." "It is in tip-top shape," I lied desperately to be sure she would not change her mind since I heard they were really choosy. After I hanged up, I suddenly realized that by that time I am already supposed to be in Ontario. . .

Fortunately I had a friend at work, called Minda (that's no nickname just regular Chinese first name, I was told) who posted my ad via e-mail on the local U.S. Bulletin Board (U.S. meaning the University of Saskatoon). I was offering all furniture for free and on the "first come first serve" basis. Four people called the very same day; they all took my address, but nobody came - they were probably scared by the word free, imagining I had really old junk to dispose of. One chap actually asked me if my Lazy Boy was covered by leather. "It is not," I admitted, "but if you give me some time, I will get it gold-plated for you."

As you can see, I was losing my nerves. In my desperation, I wondered if I shouldn't call a doctor, too. No, not shrink, but Dr. Wagner instead, the doctor of science and my good friend at the same time. He already helped me once with my moving and if we could get in our team his wife Valerie, professional engineer, we might become the only fully graduated group of movers in the whole Canada. I was encouraged by another call from Andy, who promised to let me drop my furniture on his backyard. "If we are lucky," he said, "somebody might come and steal it." Unfortunately, I also realized that both "Los Wagneros" were scheduled to be dancing soon with the local Flamenco dancing group called Alegria Espaola. Should something drop on their feet, it would be a terrible disaster! Therefore I decided to keep them as my last reserves and at the same time to start a big

counteroffensive.

It was the very next day when another idea popped in my mind: I posted another ad - that time I didn't proclaim my stuff "free" anymore, but listed it with some reasonable prices instead. In other words, I was competing with myself. One gentleman came, inspected my sofa and asked: "Is this the one which is free or the one for 50 dollars?" "This one is for fifty dollars - I have already sold the "free" one," I said hopefully, but no such luck. He didn't say anything, so I jumped right into the bargaining stage: "Shall we say forty? Thirty?". Finally, he took it kindly at no cost, which was quite fortunate for me considering that on his way downstairs he lost one leg (the sofa leg, to be accurate).

In the afternoon, I've got another visit: one lady with her husband. In order to get them interested, I told them that I was expecting other prospective buyers some time later, first group at 6 PM, the second at 7 PM, the third at 8 PM . . . Before I got to midnight, the lady decided she would take it, but at no cost and I would have to carry it down to their car myself, since her husband "has a spine, you know". I assured her I had no spine whatsoever and we closed the deal. For some uncertain reason, I had a happy feeling I just concluded the best deal of my life.

Now you may ask why I didn't see those Battered Women first. Well, it's like this: my wife claims she is not jealous, but who knows? And what's more - we have no shelters for battered husbands in Canada . . .

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SHORT STORY: THE KIDNAPPING

(Sci-fi story, first published in Amberzine, Prague)

I looked around me: the street was empty, just one car was parking near the corner. I entered the building through the revolving door. There was a little blond receptionist sitting behind the counter, a policewoman, judging by her uniform. I came to her, as close as I could, and said something about nice day. She didn't answer, but looked at me like she had some better things to do and with careful articulation, she asked: "Violence or robbery?"

Excuse me?" I couldn't help asking.

"I said: violence or robbery?"

"I didn't know I have a choice," I tried to joke, but she turned her deep blue eyes directly into my face - you know that kind: they are so deep you can't see the bottom - and she explained to me again like I was some kind of idiot: "Are you reporting violence or robbery?"

"Both," I said, but her sullen look stopped me and I added quickly: "The kidnapping, you know?"

"And who was kidnapped if I may ask?"

"Well, me, who else? I was kidnapped and now I am reporting it." "But you were already released," she objected. Obviously it did not occur to her that I might have escaped.

"Well, yes, but if you only knew what they did to me!" I hoped I would convince her, but it was not necessary: she scribbled something on a small piece of paper, handed it to me and said: "Second floor, third door to the left."

When I knocked on the door, somebody inside mumbled something I could not decipher - but I considered it as an invitation anyway and entered. A fat, unpleasant chap was sitting behind the desk.

There was only one thing interesting about him: the less hair he had on the top of his skull the more of it grew on his chin. He didn't raise his head from his activity - he was cleaning his nails and you could see how important it was for him.

"You are?" he uttered.

"Yes, apparently I am," I said with obvious disappointment. I did not like his attitude at all and immediately had a feeling that things might not go as well as I planned.

"Mr. Wilson, I presume?" he carried on like nothing happened.

*"You presume right," I assured him and being tired by his game, I added: "I came here to -"
"- to report some kidnapping," he finished my sentence. "I know, they already phoned me. It must have been quite a thrill. Luckily for you they released you; it does not happen very often. Usually they take ransom money and we can only call coroner to check out what's left from our part of the bargain. With some exceptions like if the son fakes his kidnapping to pump some money from his daddy." He cautiously looked me over and satisfied, he then continued: "But your kidnappers must have been real losers if they let you go." He smiled without showing any feeling. It was probably intended just to let me know I should not bother him with my problems. He then turned his attention back to his nails, this time on the other hand. Somehow it reminded me the biblical scene of Pontius Pilatus washing his hands in the case of Jesus C.*

Then he said, rather ironically: "And of course you don't know who they were?"

"Oh no, I do know who they were," I said, setting my tender little trap.

He slowly pulled a blank form from his shelf, together with an old chewed-up pencil and said with very tired voice: "And their names are -"

"But I don't know their names," I said with well acted hesitation.

"What do you mean 'you don't know their names'? You said you knew them!"

"Of course I know them, I just don't know their names," I insisted.

He was getting annoyed: "Are you crazy, man? Do you know them or don't?" In his excitement, he threw away the pencil he was holding in his hand. It dropped on the desk, rolled to the edge and ended on the floor. With apparent difficulty, he bent over, but he couldn't reach it from his chair. He had to stand up, make few steps and bend over again. When he finally raised his head, his face was all red. He was breathing with obvious difficulty, painfully trying to catch his breath.

Suddenly, I realized it would be quite easy. He finally straightened up and trying to keep his composure, slowly exclaimed: "Let's-start-from -the-beginning. You were - kidnapped - by somebody -"

"Not by somebody," I insisted, "but by them!"

"For God's sake, who are 'THEY'?"

"Well, THEY, you know - aliens!" I said it casually, like it was happening frequently, and was waiting for his reaction. He suddenly started to laugh, with a great relief: "Oh, THEM! Now I understand! Well, we didn't have it here yet, not today anyway. But please tell me about it, I am all ears," he said in mocking tone. "When did it happen and how did they manage it?"

"They snatched me from my apartment; apparently while I was sleeping, because I woke up on their ship and -"

He interrupted me: "When did it happen?"

"Five days ago," I said.

"How do you know it was five days ago?" He obviously enjoyed himself because he explained: "You

know, their time runs differently than ours, because they travel at extra high speed. I guess they took you back to their planet or didn't they?"

"I never said they took me anywhere," I corrected him. "And how do I know it was five days ago? I bought a newspaper before I came here - there is a date in every newspaper, if you don't know it."

"O.K, O.K.," he grunted, realizing he couldn't catch me that easy. "Then what?"

"You are not going to write it down?" I asked with faked surprise.

"I will write it down later - in the meantime I am writing it up here," he said and pointed to his bald skull. "You said -?"

"That I woke up aboard their cosmic ship -"

He interrupted me again: "And how do you know it was a cosmic ship? One guy came here once and he also claimed he saw the cosmic ship. It turned out to be just a steamer, ha ha!" he said and for several seconds, he laughed at his own idiotic joke.

I pretended I was irritated by his irony: "Listen, do you want to hear it or not? Not only you are not writing anything - you are making stupid jokes instead!"

He stopped laughing and even apologized to me, but such a way I could see he just had to, not that he wanted to. "I won't interrupt you any more," he added and then started to peel an apple, with the same knife he previously cleaned his nails.

I thrown him a weary look and carried on: "You see, they did to me something while I was sleeping. I don't know what it was, but I cannot concentrate ever since. I also lost my balance, I cannot swallow a single bite and I suffer from insomnia."

He nodded and suddenly asked, rather smartly: "And you have found all that on your way here?"

I was taken aback, but soon recovered my cool. "No, no, they released me two days ago," I quickly said the first thing which popped in my mind. "Yes, I was having these feelings for past two days."

"And have you seen a doctor?"

I knew what he meant - all was working fine. "Not yet, but I am planning to see him tomorrow."

"You do that," he advised me and started to laugh again. "And make sure he is a good psychiatrist."

I saw the right moment was there. I jumped up and hammered my fist on his desk with such a vigor that his pencil again dropped on the floor, but he didn't pay any attention to it. Instead, he was in real shock and looked at me rather sheepishly, while I kept banging and crying: "Now I know: it is you, who are hiding all this from public, you are the people who don't believe us! But you won't be hiding it for long, you won't, I promise you!"

I opened the door, so they could hear me in the other offices too. Fat man mumbled something in his desperation and tried to cool me down, but there was no way to stop me. In his hopelessness, he crouched in his chair; maybe he expected me to hit him. It certainly did not look like he wanted to defend himself or even fight. I figured I had to arrange it all by myself. I pushed him off his chair and threw it in toward the closed window. It landed somewhere on the street. When leaving his office, I slammed the door whose glass shattered in small pieces and then scattered all over the floor.

Downstairs, I noticed that the same girl I was previously talking to is shouting something at the policeman in duty. He immediately thrown himself at me, but I kicked him down without too much effort and left quickly through the revolving door. I wanted to keep running, but nobody followed me, so I thought it would be better if I accidentally trip and hit the pavement. And surely, as soon as I did, a car stopped nearby; somebody picked me up and shoved me inside.

It all worked as I expected. They were newspaper reporters, the same who were waiting at the corner for some sensational news. In my case they made a good catch: I told them all what happened and then some more. They taped our whole conversation and apparently were very satisfied. "Fine," they said, "we take care it will be in the evening news." Then they asked me where should they drop me off and I gave them the address of our company.

(conclusion in next issue)

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INCLINATIONS: INSTRUCTIONS FOR A HORRIBLE LIFE

Recently, I have received by e-mail some chain letter, the kind of pyramidal scheme, with the title: "Instructions for a good life". Strange idea popped in my head - I negated all sentences, added a little bit else and of course, changed the title. The whole letter got rather ironical aroma and here you have it:

Give people less than they expect and do it cheerfully.

Let others memorize your favorite poem.

Don't believe anything you hear, some of it may be truth.

When you say, "I love you", be sure nobody - and I mean nobody - is listening.

When you say, "I'm sorry", don't look like you really mean it.

Never tell anything from the bottom of your heart. One should never stoop that low.

Keep interrupting others - they may eventually get the idea.

Never laugh at anyone's jokes.

Hate deeply and passionately.

When someone asks you a question you don't want to answer, smile and ask: "Why do you want to know?"

Call home for money (often).

Say "I hope it is not contagious" when you hear someone sneeze.

Remember the three R's: Reward for self; Ridicule for others and a Refusal of responsibility for all your actions.

Don't let a little friendship stop a great profit.

When you realize you've made a mistake, take immediate steps to blame somebody.

Marry if you must, divorce if you can.

Open your arms to change, but don't let it change your mind.

If you want to meet great people, read obituaries.

The atmosphere in your home should be as poisonous as carbon monoxide.

Spread rumours. If at first you don't succeed, try and try again.

Be gentle with the earth, don't dig the graves too deep.

Do harm if you can, apologize if you must.

Mind your own business and their's too - after you acquire it.

Be merciless victor and sore loser.

Learn the rules and then break them.

Remember that the best relationship is the one where you do not need each other.

Judge your success by the jealousy of others.

Remember that your mask is your best character.

Approach any friend as a potential enemy.

One of these days, go someplace you've never been before: go to Hell - you are already on the list.

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HURONTARIA - 15A/98



Canadian Czech-out Webzine Kanadsko-český občasník.

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Commentary:

One time I wrote in *Amberzine*: "...Middle Ages had their minnesingers, nineteenth century romantics and this century has its *sci-fies*. I think we can look at sci-fi as a whole cultural discipline - or domain if you wish - be it expressed by word, picture, film or on Net. This culture originated from the need of our time, from the wish to cope with our technical revolution, both mentally and emotionally, the revolution which is all around us and still another one, which may yet to come." Actually, we Canadians are not doing so bad - there are good sci-fi writers in Canada, but they are mostly published in the United States. Who knows today that *William Gibson* ("Neuromancer") is a Canadian? So is *Robert Charles Wilson*, who writes now in team with *Robert J. Sawyer*. There is about 50 good Canadian sci-fi writers, wherever they may be living now.

It is true however that not all sci-fi books are written with deeper knowledge of contemporary science, technology and thinking. And I am not even talking about books where some super-intelligent creatures from cosmos are behaving like village idiots, even if measured on ly by our human criteria. We still have a lot to learn about writing sci-fi from one of the best: the one and only *Jules Verne*. It would take pages to list all his technologies which later proved to be described with incredible foresight. How did he do it? That's another mystery. . .

Hurontaria contest continues: Surely, you noticed in our issues that ironical ape or sheape (apess?) with his/her impertinent comments. Well, write to us (deadline is the end of October) *what kind (species) of ape it is* (hint: it is not a long-tailed monkey) and we will draw a winner from those who guessed it right. As a reward, the winner may give our ape the name of his/her choice. Only the first name, of course, we don't want to be sued by somebody . . .

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"Our children are spoiled rotten. I am afraid that one day they will turn into humans . . ."

Please send me a mail to my address below; your comments will be appreciated. If you want to receive announcement of the new issue by mail, add the word SUBSCRIBE. Novelty: we can send you English issue by e-mail, you can then read it by browser off-line. Add in your letter words SEND HTML We would also appreciate if you let us know where did you learn about Hurontaria.

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OTHER DIMENSIONS: INTERVIEW WITH TOM KOCH

TOM KOCH

TomKoch@compuserve.com

Tom Koch is a Canadian bioethicist and writer spending the year at The University of Hawaii. His new book, **The Limits of Principle: Deciding Who Lives and What Dies--** on which this interview is based--is the result of three years work at The Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto. The book is published by GPG - Greenwood Publishing Group Inc., Praeger Publishers. Westport, Conn. 1998. Available 11/30/1998, see also

<http://info.greenwood.com/books/0275964/0275964078.html> or search
<http://info.greenwood.com/books/>

As a writer, Koch is best known, perhaps, for his work in the field of elder care. A parental caregiver for five years, his book, **Mirrored Lives: *Aging children and Elderly Parents* (1990)** was the first book on the subject of elder care from the perspective of the caregiver. It was followed in 1993 by a larger study of caring that included the stories of a number of other caregivers (*A Place in Time: Care Givers for Their Elderly*).

In the area of news and information, his book on the use of online resources for public information writers is internationally known. Following the publication of *Journalism for the 21st Century* (1991) and *The News as Myth* (1990) he lectured in both North America and Europe, where he was the first instructor in computer-assisted journalism at *The European Journalism Centre*, Maastricht, Holland. More recently, his book, *The Message Is the Medium* (1996) approached online resources from the perspective of the user.

Finally, he works in the area of "adult crisis," in assisting normal adults facing health and other life crises. Life narratives of those who have faced and surmounted crises, and what they learned from those experiences, are included in his book *Second Chances: Crisis and Renewal in Our Everyday Lives*, published in 1998 in Toronto, Canada, by Turnerbooks <http://www.turnerbooks.com/coping>

A brief description of his work, and information on his writings, are included on his web site: <http://www.a1net.com/koch>

From: Tom Koch
To: Jan Hurych
Subject: Re: interview for Hurontaria
Date: September 21, 1998

JAN:

In your new book "The Limits of Principle", dealing with ethical dilemmas, you suggest that "the principle is the goal, not the mechanism of solution". Can you explain it a little bit more here?

Mr. KOCH:

It's hard to summarize three year's work in a few lines. As simply as possible, we've

assumed in ethics and bioethics that "principles" - beneficence, justice, "do no harm," for example - are sufficient to guide us through difficult problems. There's a problem with this. Nobody quite knows what these "principles" mean. Take, for example, the Sanctity of Human Life doctrine, the oldest and perhaps the most universal principle we have in Judeo-Christian ethics. Were we to follow it absolutely, we'd all be pacifists, of course. War would be impossible. So would capital punishment. But over the ages "sanctity" has been variously defined. So has "human" and so has "life". So the goal of ethics and bioethics, I argue, has to be a formulation that will allow us to state - clearly and in a way all may agree - what it is we wish to preserve, nurture, encourage, or prohibit.

The book first examines how principles have been used in the past. It then shows both why principles are necessarily limited and how to get out of this fix. It uses several cases, based on my work at The Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto, to demonstrate my ideas. BTW: The book will be available in October from Greenwood-Praeger <http://info.greenwood.com/>

JAN:

The recent case of Saskatchewan farmer who killed his incurable daughter to stop her unbearable pain, demonstrated that our laws are not helpful and our lawmakers are still not facing the reality. Without trying to judge any side of this case, one has to admit that suffering father was caught in the middle - he could not get help neither from medical profession nor from our law. The one party usually neglected in the equation are the relatives who suffer as well. What could be done to prevent their abandonment, their need to resolve their dilemmas on their own?

Mr. KOCH:

It's hard to know where to start, here. Let's begin with corrections. The case of Robert Latimer isn't "recent". It is, in fact, several years ago. He was convicted of killing his daughter by putting her in his truck and running carbon monoxide from the tail pipe into the cab. Tracy Latimer had Cerebral Palsy. She was not "incurable" but "chronically" ill. A host of people - including me - have "incurable conditions" that lead to "chronic conditions". Were everyone who is "incurable" to be gassed there would be precious few folks over the age of 30 left alive (*see Note from Jan below*). You are judging the case. And badly. You're basing your views on what are, I think, common but clearly incorrect assumptions.

This case most certainly did not prove, as you suggest, that "our laws are not helpful" or that "our lawmakers are still not facing reality." Quite the contrary.

The laws prohibit killing people because we think they'd be better off dead. Lawmakers, ethicists, and a lot of other people have thought long and hard about Tracy Latimer and her father.

One question he re is here physical pain. I've argued elsewhere that one issue, here, was medical treatment. Dr. Margaret Sommerville at McGill University - one of our real experts in this area - states flatly that pain that is not "paliated" (treated so a person can be aware and not in discomfort) is evidence of malpractice. She's right. Further, I've questioned elsewhere whether different treatment for her spasticity (a factor in this case. It's a ridgidty of muscle) might not have been better. A treatment call ed an intrathical pump delivering a drug like Baclofen directly into the area around the spinal chord may have offered real relief. It is, however, quite expensive. In everything I've read on the case nobody has mentioned this or other potentially pain-relieving techniques.

As to the caregiver's role in these issues - whether it be parent or child - they're not forgotten. But they're not often given the support they need. I've never read about the level of home support that the Latimers may have received from social workers, visiting nurses, etc. I can't comment, therefore. Neither can you. As to my views on caregiving - a subject I know personally and professionally - check my book list. ESPECIALLY SEE: *Mirrored Lives: Aging children and Elderly Parents* (1990); *A Place in Time: Care Givers for their Elderly* (1993), both from Greenwood-Praeger; and also see my recent book *Second Chances* for stories along this line, especially the first. It's available from Turnerbooks in Toronto

<http://www.turnerbooks.com/copin>

JAN:

Contrary to other dilemmas, ethical dilemmas cannot be resolved by compromises. Mostly, we have to decide between two evils and sometimes, there are really no big winners. Some states like Holland went further than others, some are seriously considering to change their laws - the others are simply doing nothing. I for myself believe we should not leave those problems to our children as a bad inheritance - after all any one of us could face those dilemmas tomorrow and some of us surely will. It will not be easy to start the things moving - could you point out for us some difficulties we could face?

Mr. KOCH:

You assume ethical dilemmas "cannot be resolved by compromises". Of course they can. Often, between many positions there are elements everyone can and will agree

to. That's one of the things this new book demonstrates. Also let me point out that even advocates of euthanasia in Holland have told me their advocacy is based on the assumption that all possible medical and social care be available to all persons. That's a precondition for euthanasia in their world. And before it is discussed in Canada, it should be a precondition in our world, too. I've written about this in several papers listed on my web page, by the way. I've a chapter in a new book, out next year, that hits this point again and again.

JAN:

Ethical dilemmas cannot be left only for lawmakers to decide. We need a straight talk from doctors as well - sure, they should never give up hope, but they have to be also clear when there are no chances of recovery. If we cannot save one particular life, we should at least relieve the pain - at least that's how I understand the Hippocratic oath. Sure, their hands are now tied by laws, but we need their support. And of course before we can influence lawmakers, we need to educate the public. How should we go about that?

Mr. KOCH:

This isn't a question about the book, or about ethics. It's about how you perceive physicians. Since the argument here is that if only their hands were not tied they'd somehow support your beliefs about euthanasia, there's not a lot I can say. Some doctors do, some don't. I've spoken to both groups. The way to influence the public is to fight ignorance. That means being careful one's facts are correct, accepting that sometimes what one assumes isn't the case, and acknowledging the complexity of the issue. It means finding common ground and building from it, and then writing about it.

For example, if the issue in the Latimer case is her "pain," that is one thing. Many have discussed it, and the level of it's treatment or non-treatment. If the issue is that she was chronically ill, however, that's another. As many in the disability community pointed out, killing folk because of physical limits is not the route we wish to go. And, of course, if the issue is support for family caregivers, it's another thing. I suspect that, when you get down to it, the "principles" you and I would arrive at would be these:

All Effort to limit physical pain. If it means more health care expenditures for special techniques in severe cases . . . do it. If it means releasing more powerful drugs into the hands of doctors . . . do it. If it means different forms of drug administration, do it. Stop pain wherever possible.

Supporting home care and home care givers is a critical part of patient care. If this means subsidizing respite . . . do it. If it means providing home (or farm or work) help so a person can tend a fragile loved one . . . do it. It's the type of assistance we want everyone to receive.

See? We've arrived at principles--despite obvious disagreements over the Latimer case--that are practical and could be implemented. That's what the book is about. Indeed, it's what all my writing has been about for some years.

JAN:

Thank you very much on behalf of our readers and let me wish you success in your endeavours.

Note from Jan: *Hurontaria is trying to keep our interviews without editing or any restrictions whatsoever - that's what makes them unique. This time however, I had to question the use of the word "gassing" in Mr. Koch's reply, since it may imply that it was what we proposed in our question, which of course we didn't. Mr. Koch, on the other hand, believed that since in that particular case the gassing was actually done, the use of the word was appropriate. At the end, we agreed that his answer will be left as it was, with this little note of explanation.*

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LIFE: CHECK-IT-OUT!

While living in English speaking environment, you can't help noticing that people around you make all kinds of jokes directed towards other nationalities. Yes, I am talking about those innocent anecdotes, called *ethnic jokes*. Poles, Germans, Mexicans and even *Newfies* (Canadians from New Foundland) are treated by jest, and sometimes the humor is not all that funny, if you don't know specifics. Because, believe it or not, those are mostly *inside jokes* and they may need an explanation.

There are not that many jokes about *Czechs*, but then again, there is not too many Czechs around here either. To compensate for the lack of jokes, people use the variations of the word "Czech", or rather of two words, which sound the same: *check* and *cheque* (which I am told is the way they spell it in England).

But first, let me explain the historical background of the word Czech:

1. It is the name of the legendary leader named *Czech*, who brought Czech tribe

into Central Europe

2. It could also mean Czech tribe, which later became Czech nation
3. Of course, each member of the Czech nation is also of Czech nationality, in short he is a *Czech*
4. And wouldn't you believe it, their language is also called Czech language, in short "*Czech*"

You have to admire how great all that is: one name for everything. On the other hand, it shows certain lack of imagination, too, but let me tell you this: Czechs are very practical people and they like things to be simple.

Now let's return back to their history: as their tribe moved in the place, which is now called *Czech Republic* (what a coincidence!) they faced one big problem: somebody was already there. The records do not show how many of local inhabitants (mainly Celts: Boimi, Markomani and Quadi), were pushed out and how many of them had to assimilate. The fact is that there are some traces of old Gaelic in Czech language even today.

So come to think of it, the ethnic jokes are rather mild revenge on Czechs, considering they took the best place in the Europe - or so they think. Having a good sense of humor, Czechs take these jokes with a mild amusement. There is quite a number of those - you can imagine resourceful people of North America (I never heard those jokes in England) came with all kinds of word combinations with double - and sometimes even funny - meanings:

- Czech-mate
- bouncing Czech
- rubber Czech
- Czeching in
- Czech-out counter
- Czeched flag
- Czech up on you
- Czech-book
- Czech-list
- Czechers
- Rain-Czech
- Czeching account
- highway Czech-point, and
- Czech is in the mail

As I said, I haven't seen any Czech to be offended by them, but then again: they don't get mad, they get even. Well, almost, like in my case . . .

Long time ago, I joined one Canadian company, who was famous by their excessive training of their new employees. It did not matter that some of us were real veterans of industry with tons of experience of our own, the show simply had to go on. Training lasted several weeks and every day, we had tests - very silly tests, to be accurate. One day, I had enough of it. When our mentor (or should I say tormentor?) announced another test, I just stood up and headed for the door.

"Where do you think you are going?" he asked with the voice of sergeant major. "What do you mean : ' Where do you think you are going?' ," I repeated his words, faking surprise.

"I mean exactly that," he said, "Where do you think you are going?"

"I am going out," I explained.

"And who allowed you to leave?" he demanded.

"You did," I replied with utmost patience and kept on moving.

"Stop right there!" he shouted. "What do you mean 'You did' ?"

The class had a time of their life. And I kept on clowning: "Not only you all owed me, you actually *ordered* me to leave."

"I did not!" he disagreed.

"You did so," I tried to convince him, with quite opposite result.

He screamed on the top of his lungs: "I did not!"

"But you did so and everybody in the classroom heard it too."

He had no answer and stood there, apparently puzzled by that mystery. I realized that was just about as much as he could take and hurried up with explanation:

"You came in the classroom and announced: "Check-out!". Well, I am the only Czech in this classroom and besides, since I hate violence, especially when I am on the receiving end - "

The whole class roared with laugh. I guess he didn't want to look silly, because he actually started to laugh too. When others finally stopped rejoicing, he paused and laughed again. "It won't work, Jan, " he said with a broad smile on his face. "He who laughs last laughs best. And it won't be you. Come back and sit down. I tell you what I do: if you are in such a hurry, you can finish the test in half a time. I will personally clock you. Agreed?"

Needless to say, that was not a multiple choice question - I had no choice. I guess some people just cannot take a joke, that's all. What bothers me however is that "he who laughs last ..." is the famous Czech proverb. How did *he* get hold of it?

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SHORT STORY: THE KIDNAPPING - conclusion
(Sci-fi story, first published in Amberzine, Prague)

"How are you, Harry?" asked me one girl, passing by. I answered her, but she continued walking without even bothering to stop. I didn't mind - there were other problems in line and the most important one was still waiting. As soon as I entered my office, the phone started to ring. The receptionist probably called my boss. And surely enough, it was Ben and being quite upset, he was inviting me to see him. To tell the truth, it was more like an order than invitation, but I was waiting for few minutes to get him even more excited. Then I got up and went.

"Harry," he said, pulling nervously at his cheap tie. "Harry," he repeated, like he was enamored in my name.

"Yes?" I tried to get him started.

"You know what I want to talk about, don't you?" he said.

"About your golfing, I presume. Not again, please!" I begged him. "I don't want to be here whole day."

And then he was right where I wanted him: mad and screaming: "Golfing my foot! You were missing for five days and didn't even bother to tell anybody anything! Who do you think you are? Old Mac Allister is kicking my butt every day and all that because of you. They called your house, but nobody answered. Where have you been?"

I guessed right - he was interested in my report. If he only knew, where the report was hidden now! I tested him: "Why do you ask? Do you want to know about me or just about my report?"

"Both, but first you have to tell me where you have been all that time."

"I don't know how could tell you that. I'm sure you won't believe me."

"Try me," he winked at me, "I am a man of the world, I will understand."

"O.K., but I warned you. I was kidnapped by aliens."

I know, I know, " he nodded absentmindedly, then suddenly shouted: "What did you say?"

"I was kidnapped by aliens," I repeated slowly, "and I spent - how many you said? - oh yes, five days aboard of their spaceship."

He regained his composure: "Are you trying to make fun of me? Because I really don't care what you have been doing. So where is the report, eh?"

"I don't have it, Benny, it does not exist. But let me tell you, while I was on that ship, I saw the things you would not believe. And if I start tomorrow, then after a month or two. . ."

I enjoyed his reaction: his face gradually changed from light reddish to dark

crimson . He started to yell like a wounded animal: "Stop joking, you clown! Tell me where is that damned report?"

"Come to think of it," I carried on, " two months may not be enough - you see, they operated on me and took something out . . . "

"Yes, your brain," he laughed hysterically. Actually, he was half laughing and half weeping, since it finally dawned at him that the catastrophe was inevitable. "Who do you think you are? Our company spent millions of dollars on this project and you think yo u can get away with this? The report should have been here last Monday! The president and stockholders are waiting with baited breath for it and you come here emptyhanded! Do you think I can go to my boss and tell him: 'You see, our Harry was slightly overworked, but he promised that maybe in two months he might have it -" He moaned again and shook his head: "My God! Tell me you are just kidding! Or tell me it is only a bad dream. Man, don't you know they can fire both of us?" He paused and then it sudden ly struck him: "I know - you want a raise, do you? O.K., I promise that you will get it, just show me that bloody report!"

I tried to stop him: "You don't need to promise me anything, you did that many times before. Just tell your boss that the report does not exist and I am not at all interested how soon they need it. And just for your information, I didn't lie, it was all true about those aliens, you know!"

My impertinence shocked him so much that he could only stutter: "Y-y-y-o-u, Y-y-y-o-u, Y-y-you w-w-ill pay for this! That was the only military contract we had and you don't laugh at the army, you know! But I know what it is: you want my job, don't you? Yes, that is, but you will not outsmart me, not me! I am going to see old Mac and you will see! Wait here," he snapped at me and went for the door. He stopped there for a moment, shook his head and groaned again: " My God, such an important report!"

Mac Allister's office was next to his. I stepped behind the door to be able t o listen, but there was no need. Ben was crying so loud that even Mac had to calm him down. "Sir, " I heard him wheezing, " I am telling you, Harry got crazy and the situation is really serious. He does not have any report and he keeps repeating he was kidnapped by the UFO. The whole project is now delayed and I even doubt if Harry has written anything at all. I am sorry I did not recognize the state of his mind earlier, but to me he looked quite normal. I guess it was caused by stress, he really worked har d - but we just cannot let him carry on, it would be dangerous for such an important project."

"You are certainly right, " agreed Mac," it would be too much risky. But first we

have to send him to our psychiatrist -"

"If you permit me, Sir," interrupted Ben, who saw his plan already crumbling, "I would like to recommend not to do that. Otherwise we might be forced to pay him something or even get sued. It would be rather easier to dismiss him for the breach of discipline - we do not need to know anything about his mental state after all; we may pretend we haven't noticed anything. It's too bad, I liked Harry very much," he lied, making me laugh.

"Me too," said the other hypocrite. "It is a great tragedy, but what can we do? I will explain it to president myself - it is actually the only good explanation we have if there is no report at all. But where can we find a replacement for Harry?"

"I already have somebody," lied Ben without hesitation.

"O.K., bring Harry here," ordered Mac and I quickly jumped back into Ben's office.

"Mr. Wilson, Ben here is telling me that you don't have that report," said Mac and to eliminate other possibilities, he added: "But you were only joking, right?"

"No, not really," I managed a polite smile, "I don't have it, Sir."

"Come, come, enough of those jokes," he still warmed his hopes. "O.K., you will get your raise, but be reasonable and give me that report."

"There is no report, really," I kept my idiotic smile.

Luckily, Mac was still translating it wrong way. "Of course, together with your promotion to Ben's position, what do you say?" he dropped few pounds on my side of scale.

"And how about Ben here?" I could not suppress my curiosity.

"He will go back to our laboratory, will you, Ben?" said the old fox. Ben turned red with anger, but said nothing.

It felt good to see Ben suffer, but my time was running out and I had to take care of few more things. "Believe me, I wish Ben and myself all the best, but it won't work. I do not have any report, because it does not exist," I lied.

It was Mac's turn to get purple in his face - he probably realized that the infamous laboratory was the best he could soon expect, too. "You don't realize who you are talking to, young man. Save all your jokes for later time, after you are fired. I am asking you for the last time: do you have that report or not?"

"I do not have it. I would surely like to make you happy, but no - I do not have it. The results were all negative. It would not help you with the board of directors, I assumed, so I decided not to write any report at all."

"Or maybe you have it and want to sell it to our competition, eh?" he barked at me.

"We can let you arrest for that, you know!"

I glanced at my watch. "Sure," I said, "but you have to catch me first!" I run out

of his office, whizzed through the reception a raced to the parking lot. I jumped behind the steering wheel of my car, turned on the ignition and headed for the state parkway.

It was already dark, when I entered the motel room. I closed the door and turned on the light. Then I spreaded on the table all evening newspapers I bought at the corner store. One editorial claimed that "police withheld information that famous scientist was abducted by aliens", the second maintained that "physicist Wilson run away with stolen documents - the search continues" and the third one was speculating "sings of overworking: Wilson claims he was aboard of UF O spaceship". I enjoyed them all - obviously it all depended on the source the reporters were able to reach.

I sat down in the chair, leaned back and considered the situation. The main task was behind me and I could be surely satisfied with myself. I looked at Wilson, who was, drugged, sleeping comfortably on the corner sofa. "Poor Harry," I addressed him, knowing he could not hear me. "Nothing personal, old buddy, but I had to do it. When we obtained information that you discovered the principle of flying saucer, we simply had to step in, you can understand that. After all, it was *your* mistake that you confined to your friend, even if you couldn't suspect he was our spy. What was I then supposed to do with you? When I learned from you all you knew, I erased your memory, but I could not risk you might eventually remember something, so I had to destroy you. Tomorrow, you will be locked in some sanatorium or if you are lucky, you get a bullet right in your forehead."

I opened the closet and took out the small suitcase. Then I keyed the necessary code and telescopic antenna of the transpositor raised all around me. In a short while, I started to feel that I am changing and soon I didn't look like Wilson at all - it was just me again. I then turned off the equipment and the antenna automatically slid back into the suitcase. I took it in one hand, grasped the attaché case with Harry's report by the other hand and was ready to go. I was almost at the door, when I returned back to the desk. I almost forgot Harry's car keys - I would still need his car to drive some place North, where I am to meet our spaceship . . .

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INCLINATIONS: LIMERICKS

Compliments.

**However hard we are trying
having our spirits up flying,
being used to tell lie
we just cannot deny
there's always one lie we are buying.**

**Lovable little boy Cupid
decided magically swoop it.
Thinking we are double
cute and admirable,
just like a peacock we're stupid.**

**It is human sentiment
that one silly compliment
can make person happy.
Old man or young preppie,
they both think they're smart supremento.**

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HURONTARIA - 16A/98



Canadian Czech- out Webzine Kanadsko-ěeský oběasník.

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Commentary:

I have recently looked in my records and noticed that more than 65 WEB pages and sub-pages worldwide have links to *Hurontaria*. We are also promoted by *Britské Listy*, *Kanadské Listy* and several libraries, tourist agencies and universities. True, I don't deny that I wrote few letters with requests to my friends and foes, but at least half of the links appeared on their own, without me knowing about it. How did I find out? Well, just start any search engine on the Net, for instance *Altavista* and there you are. One third of links is located on web pages from Czech Republic, the rest is elsewhere a round the world. And I thank you all for that.

Just a little explanation - rather late, I am afraid - why is Hurontaria the bilingual webzine. Actually it is not - it just uses two languages. Bilingual magazine would have both halves the same, each in different language. I didn't want that, since at least one third of our readers is *bilingual* and the other half of the issue would be superfluous for them. Why did I start with two languages at all? I guess it is like that joke from the movie "The Magnificent Seven", where the man who jumped into the cactus bush, explained: "It was just an idea". I wanted to promote Czech language (and Czech thinking in particular) around the world and - would you believe it? - not everybody there speaks Czech language. Fortunately, I had few stories wrote for my Writer's Workshop in Saskatoon. I put them in, mixed it with few other articles and several verses undeservedly claiming to be a poetry. It was good enough for few issues, but later I was on my own aga in.

In order to save some time, I invented the e-mail interviews, where interviewees write the other half for me. Also, as anybody who ever settled in another country, I do posses split personality and i need two languages for communication with my other self, see my signature on this page. It already backfired: one gentleman copied our interview on his page using my name as *Jan Honza* (Honza being the family name, while it is only nickname). But I consider it rather nice and have no intent ion to ask him to correct it.

Finally, for the students of second language, there is a another advantage: after being tired with translations, they can retire back to their "native" half and relax. After all, Hurontaria was meant to be leisure reading and not *only* for me...

Hurontaria contest: The winner is Mr. George Stepanek from Mississauga, Ontario, who already picked the name for our ape and named *him* (yes, such sarcastic creature surely must be the male) - CHUCKEY. And the ape of course is the *chimpanzee*, which was confirmed to us by the expert, Mr. Ivan Hájek, Ph.D., C.Sc., the member of Czech Academy of Sciences, who was also Senior Lecturer of *Makerere University in Kampala* (Uganda). The section will be therefore called *Chuckey's Paradigms and Paradoxes*.

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Chuckey's Paradigms and Paradoxes:

**"Knowledge without experience is like a car without wheels.
Experience without knowledge is like wheels without car . . ."**

Please send me a mail to my address below; your comments will be appreciated. If you want to receive announcement of the new issue by mail, add the word SUBSCRIBE. Novelty: we can send you English issue by e-mail, you can then read it by browser off-line. Add in your letter words SEND HTML We would also appreciate if you let us know where did you learn about Hurontaria.

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OTHER DIMENSIONS: INTERVIEW WITH PATRICK FULLICK

PATRICK FULLICK

plf@soton.ac.uk

is the Lecturer in Science and Technology Education in the University of Southampton's Research and Graduate School of Education. Before that, he was the Head of Physics at St Michael's RC School in Watford, and then Head of Science and Technology at Bournemouth School. His interests lie in finding out how young people understand the world of science - and in particular, the way that scientists work. As part of this work, in November 1995 he began publishing Sci-Journal, <http://www.soton.ac.uk/~plf/Sci-Journal/index.html>. This was the first journal to publish young people's accounts of their school and college science investigations on the World Wide Web. Sci-Journal was awarded second prize in the "Individuals" category of the first Cable & Wireless Childnet International Awards Scheme, presented in London on January 15 1998.

He is a member of the *Institute of Physics*, a member of the *Royal Society of Chemistry*, a Fellow of the *Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce* (by invitation), and is on the Editorial Board of the journal *Physics Education*. He is also an author of many articles in education and the book: *Teaching Ethical Aspects of Science*. Southampton: Bassett Press, 1996, pp 150. (Joint editor with M. Ratcliffe). His personal page is on <http://www.soton.ac.uk/~plf/>

From: Patrick Fullick

To: Jan Hurych

Subject: Re: interview for Hurontaria

Date: October 19, 1998

JAN:

You are the publisher of Sci-Journal, the on-line publication which allows students around the world a chance to publish articles about their work in science classes. To my knowledge, it may be the first magazine of its kind. How did you get that idea and what problems you had to overcome?

PATRICK:

I began by getting together with a group of interested science teachers back in early 1995. I wanted to get teachers and their students as serious Internet users rather than just "surfers", so involving teachers from the start was an important first step my first. As I am involved in both pre-service and in-service teacher education as part of my work here at Southampton University, finding enthusiastic science teachers in local schools was not difficult.

In our first meeting, we discussed how we might use the Internet to enhance children's experience of school science. Although most of the teachers in the group had only a sketchy idea of exactly what the Internet actually is (remember, this was over three and a half years ago!) they realised from the start that it could offer them and their students new insights. Teachers told stories about the way that many students find communicating using computers very motivating. Common experiences included students typing messages to each other across the school's computer network after lessons, before proceeding to walk home together! We decided immediately that if such enthusiasm was to be harnessed in science classes, students COMMUNICATING SCIENCE to each other over the Internet had to play a big part in it.

From this point, it became a matter of lots of hard work in getting the journal known and used, and (not least) in my developing the skills and knowledge needed to get a Web-based publication started. The issue of getting the journal widely known and used really has been (and continues to be) one of the major tasks to accomplish, and thus perhaps the "difficulty" in your question. Although the journal receives hundreds of "hits" each week from around the world, I have as yet got very little evidence that it is really being used as we initially intended - that is, to get children communicating science. At the present I should say that the journal is operating principally in a "vanity publishing" mode, where students and their teachers are very pleased to see work published, but see this as the end of the process rather than just the beginning.

JAN:

You also run Noticeboard, which provides excellent feedback to Sci-Journal from all over the world. Could you tell us how is the publication received by readers and what are the advantages of on-line publishing contrary to the old fashioned one?

PATRICK:

The range of responses from readers (and from authors too) is fascinating. Originally I had intended that the noticeboard would provide a means of students and schools communicating needs with each other (for example, ideas for investigations, or equipment needed). However, this aspect of the journal really didn't seem to be the

main focus of interest to readers, and so I use it now as a way of publishing (anonymously) some of the comments people send me by e-mail.

From such comments, it's clear that there are many types of users of the journal. Students often browse the journal to see what other students are doing and to (sometimes) get ideas for homework:

*"Hello! I am a chemistry student at **** High School in ****, Washington, and I really need some information on rennin. After finding Tamsin's report, I think she may have the info. I'm looking for. I need to know what the chemical formula (makeup) is of rennin for a research project. Please reply ASAP!*

*Thanks a million!"
US student, June 1998*

Other readers are parents, who are checking out what's going on in the world of science education, and maybe using it with their children:

"My family and I found your site quite by accident. My wife teaches biology and general science to students aged 13-16.

"We are really impressed with the quality of papers published by young British students in Sci-J. They have become an inspiration to my two children aged eleven and ten."

Singapore reader, August 1997

Still other readers are teachers who use the site for a number of reasons, not least to download articles to use in training sessions when deciding how to mark science practical work!

As far as electronic publication versus paper-based publication is concerned, I shall limit my comments to the immediate context of Sci-Journal. (There's a lot that has already been written about the advantages and disadvantages of publishing academic work electronically, and I haven't time or space to get into this argument here!) As a routine part of practical work in school science, students write up their laboratory and field work, as required by our National Curriculum. Sometimes the work is displayed on the walls of classrooms and corridors for other students to see. Often, students are encouraged to present their accounts to each other, describing what they did, and how they account for their results. Yet it is very rarely that students get the chance to do this on anything other than the smallest scale, since traditional technologies make publishing work a cumbersome process, with long time lags built-in. (Just think about sending students' paper-based accounts of their science investigations to students at

the school just down the road, and then establishing a correspondence about the work and you'll see what I mean.)

In contrast to traditional publishing methods, the Internet provides a way to publish students' work quickly and simply. It can make that work available for other students around the world to read, and it can carry correspondence from those students too. The combination of rapid publication and wide availability is what immediately attracted us to this idea of publishing students' work on the Web. We decided to call the electronic journal for science students "Sci-Journal". The capitalisation of the journal title is deliberately ambiguous, so that it reads as Sci (for "Science") and as ScI (for "Science I" - the part of the National Curriculum for science which relates to experimental and investigative science).

JAN:

What are the criteria for acceptance of the article? I noticed that the published ones were all of high quality - do you have to reject many submissions?

PATRICK:

Interestingly, I have to reject very few submissions, although you will see that not all of the students' work is necessarily "good science". There are good reasons for going for this approach.

As I've already noted, much of what has been done so far with Sci-Journal lies in the sphere of what I think of as "vanity publishing" - giving pupils and schools a good "buzz" about work that's published. In a way this is the use of the WWW as a glorified noticeboard, a place to publish work like that in the school classroom or corridor, but visible to a far greater audience.

I don't have any problem with this kind of use (it's inevitably the sort of publishing that goes on at a school's own Web site, where students' work is put up for just that purpose - of making the student and the school feel good). I've always been very clear in writing and talking about the project that affective gains are, especially in the early days of this technology, likely to be a very important factor. (Inevitably, I suspect, this effect will become less pronounced as the medium becomes much more established and taken-for-granted by young people.) However, my aspirations for Sci-Journal lie in the cognitive domain, where sharing and criticising work can help youngsters to understand scientific knowledge better, and to understand how that knowledge is/was constructed (with my particular research interest being the latter).

As Robin Millar and others have pointed out, virtually all school science is concerned with a core of knowledge which is pretty well uncontested. Therefore, there are essentially 4 options that one has if one wishes to publish students' work:

1. Edit/require to be edited all work so that published articles contain only ideas that accord with the core of accepted scientific knowledge. This process to be done between ScI-Journal editor/student/student's teacher.

2. Edit/require to be edited all work so that published articles contain only ideas that accord with the core of accepted scientific knowledge. This process to be done by a process of peer review, within a community of fellow students. This process would probably require the involvement of ScI-Journal editor and students' teachers too.

3. Publish all articles as they are received, and put a "health warning" on the site saying that the ideas contained in articles have not been reviewed, and must be examined critically - but then doing nothing more about it.

4. Publish all articles as they are received, and encourage a healthy debate about the ideas in them publicly in the journal and by e-mail between peer reviewers (who can be any student other than the author(s)) and the author. This debate would also be open to anyone other than students, either explicitly, or implicitly, through the moderation of students' ideas in discussions outside the forum of ScI-Journal, as students constructed their reviews of the work and responses to these.

It's the fourth option that I've chosen to pursue, since I think that there are significant shortcomings in all the others. (Options 1 and 3 have little educational merit, while option 2 has merit, but is restricted to a very small group of students - or at least, a much smaller group than it is possible to involve in option 4.)

For me then, the issue lies in getting going the healthy debate about the youngsters' ideas. If we can just get a critical mass of article writers and reviewers, we can then achieve what I've set out to do all along - publish ScI-Journal three or four times a term, and expose ideas to scrutiny in a way that requires the students to think about how they have used their evidence to construct an explanation, and then how they can convince others of its worth.

My own research suggests that option 4 can and does work within the bounds of a classroom, in which work is shared and commented upon critically, producing increased understanding of scientific knowledge and (crucially for me) the process of its production.

JAN: As a student, I came up in my thesis with some interesting points, which were later published by somebody, who discovered them after I did. Would publishing in ScI-Journal prevent such misfortune? On the other hand, how do you check for originality of the submitted article - and what about the copyright?

PATRICK:

Ah, well here's the rub! Just because one is publishing electronically, I don't think that one can assume that one's work is going to be any better known than if it is published on paper. In fact in some instances it may be less well known, since it may not be seen as published in a "prestigious" way as if it had been published in the "International Journal of Whatever". (I assume that we're talking a bout academic publishing here.) Of course electronic publishing could work to enable academics to publish their "esoteric" work and so publicise it themselves (as Harnad and others have argued), but the rules of the academic publishing game are still well stacked against this mode of publication.

Now potentially of course electronic publishing enables greater checks on materials, since it's much easier to index electronic materials than paper-based ones. But essentially it still comes down to peer-review - and there can be no substitute for knowledgeable reviewers deciding on the status of knowledge. As I put it to my students: "Which new treatment would you rather your doctor offered you - the one he found last night at <http://www.whatever.com/> or the one he saw published last week in the British Medical Journal?!"

Of course, the above paragraphs are a little off-beam when it comes to considering the work in ScI-Journal, which is publishing the work of young students in areas that are well-understood and where the answers are well-accepted. So here I'm not too worried about accepting articles about the same topics - although I do expect the work to be the product of the named author, as the copyright page in the journal explains. As far as I see it, learning about the process of publication is another important part of the work of the journal.

JAN:

Thank you very much on behalf of our readers and let me wish you success in your endeavours.

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LIFE: OKTOBERFEST K-W

October is the month of Oktoberfests. If you don't know what *Oktoberfest* is, you are probably missing very much. Let's just say it is the festival celebrating the end of summer season, good harvest and - most importantly - the beer. First things first - it is written *Oktoberfest* and don't you forget it. Its origin is in the land of old Germany, but as her sons and daughters spread around the world and multiplied, so did their festivals. Today, it is not just German festival - no Sir - its popularity grew among other nations, continents and even galaxies. There are many places in North America celebrating Oktoberfest, but biggest of all festivals is in *K-W*, which means the twin city *Kitchener-Waterloo*, Ontario, Canada. Well, they say it is also the second largest Oktoberfest in the world, the first one being of course in *Munich*, Germany.

Kitchener and Waterloo are so close together that they are practically separated by one street only, so the leaders of both towns smartly decided to go for joined festival. The decision was made apparently long time ago, since this year *K-W Oktoberfest* celebrated 30 years of its existence. By the way, there is about 80 places in the whole world, named *Waterloo*: 35 in the U.S.A, 12 down under in Australia, 5 in Jamaica and one - that's right, my dear field marshal *Blücher*, Napoleon had his last laugh after all - only ONE in Germany! The largest Waterloo is of course in Ontario; it has population of 90 thousand, which is twice the number of soldiers killed in that battle (it was the year 1815, if you happened to skip history classes at school).

This year the *Oktoberfest in K-W* was from October 9 to 17, but it was preceded even earlier by the *Pageant Ball, Fashion Show and Miss Oktoberfest Pageant*. There was 22 *Festhallen* open - but wait, first I have to introduce some vocabulary here to be able to carry on:

Festhallen - Festival halls

Gemüchlichkeit - Cheers!

Ein Prosit - To your health!

Bier - Beer

Wunderbar - Great, Wonderful

Bogenschuützenfest - The official *K-W* Oktoberfest archery event

Lederhosen - The leather pants worn by Bavarian men from Tirol

Apfelstrudel - Flaky pastry and apples, apple pie

Torte - Delicious cake, gateau

Oompahpah - Brassband style of German music

Jodler - The guy who sings incredibly high notes, probably after inhaling helium gas

Auf Wiedersehen - See you again, Till the next time

Well, this is only the official translation, let me add that *festhallen* are also *bierhallen*, that main attraction there being of course German or "German-style" beer. Talking about attractions: last year it was 45 different activities, starting from *rolling of barrels* while the music was playing the famous melody "*Roll out the barrels*", better known as "*The Beer Barrel polka*". Very few people know it was originally Czech polka named "*Škoda lásky*" (which means something like "Pitty your love"), composed by V. Vejvoda and brought to England by Czech pilots during the World War II.

There was also *bogenschu....* - well, archery for short, several entertainments for kids and of course unofficial competition in eating and drinking everywhere around. Then there was a parade, lead by the Fest ambassador *Onkel Hans* (Uncle John). It was a puppet, dressed like a Tirolean fellow, in short *lederhosen* - German lads are particularly fond on their hairy legs - with muppet head and tirolean hat. Part of the parade consisted of many marching bands from Canada, USA, Germany, Austria and the rest of the world. There were also gypsies from Stuttgart, Kiwanis Kavaliers Drum Corps, Oompahpah kapellen e.t.c. Of course, Ontario King of Polka *Walter Ostanek* with his accordion could not be missing either.

Another Oktoberfest event was *The Ontario Award: Woman of the year*, in several categories: Art/ History / Literature, Business / Entrepreneur, Community Volunteer, Employee, Homemaker, Humanitarian, Professional, Senior, Sport and Young Adult.

I have to admit that while I was there many times before I could not make it this year. How come that I know all those details? Simply, from WEB. Their page is <http://www.oktoberfest.ca> The page exists now for 4 years is updated for every year. You will find there some other interesting things, such as the above mentioned vocabulary and list of recipes (in English). You can also *hear* Walter Ostanek in audio, watch the pictures of all beautiful Misses of past Oktoberfests and much more.

I admit that before I went through their recipe book, I gave myself a hefty lunch - but I got hungry all the same: *Sauerbraten, Vanilla Pretzels, Mandeltorte, Linzentorte, Hambourg Rouladen, Szegedinen goulash* and many other goodies I don't even dare to translate here. For beer lovers there is also *Boiled Beef in Beer* and something called a *Biertorte*. I am also a cook-amateur and I will surely try their *Schwarzwalden Ki rschtorte* - after all I still have my grandfathers Schwarzwalden cuckoo clock somewhere - I just have to figure out how to mix it in .

..

I have celebrated Oktoberfests in several other cities like Montreal, Oakville, Saskatoon, Hannover (in Ontario) and even one in El Paso, Texas. Unfortunately never did I witness it in Czech Republic, since there wasn't any. Now that is really sad, since Oktoberfest is actually the holiday of beer and Czechs are after all among the top five beer consumers in the world (per capita, of course). I am sorry to admit it, but such great nation of beer guzzlers don't even have a patron saint of beer. I bet *Pilsener* and *Budweiser* would sound familiar to you, but not everybody knows that Pilsen (Plzeň) and Budweiss (Budějovice) are really Czech towns and fame of their beers goes back to Middle Ages. Now I have a nice saint for you, *Saint Gambrinus* - which is accidentally also the name of probably the best of Czech beers.

Yes, we should start the *Fest of St. Gambrinus* and show them Bavarians that we have something to celebrate, too. Till then, have one beer on me: *To your health!*
Ein Prosit! Na zdraví!

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SHORT STORY: THE REALLY BAD VIRUS (Sci-fi Fairy Tale)

My children, this story happened such a long time ago it really sounds like a fairy tale. If I remember it correctly, I heard it about a year after they abolished all mental institutions and lunatic asylums. Of course, that was done only after RIPSO (Research Institute for Public and Secret Opinions) discovered that the number of crazies, madmen and nuts running free was higher than the one of those locked in cuckoo houses. All that because of one really mean computer virus . . .

Let me start from the very beginning. It was the time of computer hackers, some of them good, the others bad. No, *Alice*, I don't mean they were bad at hacking - on the contrary - but the results of their activities were bad, very bad. Those hacker, my boys and girls, were designing all kinds of bad viruses and spread them around in computers and notebooks. Well, in those times the notebooks were not carried as wristwatches like they are nowadays, but they were rather big and ugly. They looked liked books, that's why they called them *notebooks*. No, *Ritchie*, there was no music notes in them either. And those viruses erased, crippled or even destroyed the programs, databases and even wrote indecent messages on screens.

One of those viruses was called *Mark's Fiddle*, which was thinly disguised anagram

of names Marx and Fidel. Oh, you don't know them? Those were the fellows growing mustaches, of course it was still fashionable then. And this Fiddle's target was the main evil of capitalism - money, or the excess of it, to be accurate. Soon the virus reached the world stock exchanges and erased all Mutual Funds' transactions. Not only that, it even erased the names of their stockholders, which was eventually driving people into bankruptcies. Well, *Georgina*, bankruptcy means something like having money one day and having only a paper the next day.

Now those stocks and bonds were mostly owned by retired people who were then forced to commit suicides, mostly jumping down from window ledges. Foolishly, they didn't wait for old age maladies, which would do the work nicely too. Sometimes they were so weak that they had to be helped to window sills by their own grandchildren. The governments didn't mind too much - after all, they saved pension and Medicare money. The real victims however were the young people, who being deeply in debt as usual, were relying on inheritances to pay for their cars and airplanes. Of course, the expected grandpa's millions didn't materialize which led to higher consumption of alcohol and drugs. The copies of all transactions were recovered two years later in the main databank of the *United Nationalities*, but it was too late: most of seniors passed the gravitation test and in the meantime the cost of drugs almost tripled.

Now back to our subject, children. If you think that was crazy, let me tell about the craziness which hit the whole world after another virus, called *Serpent*, had spread around. This virus was parasitizing on program called *CELEST* - something about heaven, I guess - sold by company named *OPUKÁL* from Vsetín, Moravian Republic. It was a slightly obsolete version, kind of virtual reality type, but it was attractive because of its low price (about 100 thousand Kč, that is about 5 million in TD, i.e. Transworld Dollars). On the cover of the CD you could see the clouds, similar to those on *Windows 95* - yes, the Windows you are still using in your classes. There was also the motto:

*"Everybody wants to go in heaven, but nobody wants to die.
Now you don't need to: try our heaven while you're still alive!
Use program CELEST with virtual reality!
We also sell less expensive MINI-CELEST for schools and universities."*

The add didn't lie: you could scan the photographs of your dearly departed and *voilà*, you were right there. You could talk to them and the music was playing "Heaven, I'm in heaven . . ." What is *voilà*? That's the exclamation we are using, dear *Bobbie*, when we perform and experiment and it works - for some obscure reason. People liked the game, they arranged their dates "upstairs" and went to

listen harp concertos on *cumulonimbus* or angel choruses on *stratocumulus*. Those choruses, needless to say, were trying not to do too much damage to old Bach or Handel, but with only a little success. There were of course the others, who complained: for instance one bach elor of science from Lyon, Francofonia, met his mother-in-law there. His claim (that she went to devil rather than to heaven) was rejected by experts due to the fact that bachelors by definition were not supposed to be married. It reminds me something: do you know, my children, why was the virus called *Serpent*? Yes, it means the snake, the one which appeared to Eve on the tree in heaven. Yes, Jimmy, you are right, of course I meant *the paradise*; after all, there are no snakes in heaven.

Nobody could find out who created the dreaded virus, but that was not too surprising: the hackers were usually very modest, mostly because they could be sentenced to jail for it. Jail? Well, it's like if your parents lock you up in one room and give you only TV, video, stereo, computer full of games and videophone. It was that bad. The virus was originally created as a joke - nobody expected it could also infect people. Sure, Jeannie, it was not living virus and people could not be infected biologicaly. But the virus was displaying on the screen all kinds of slogans, messages and orders, in the mode which we call *subliminal*. In other words, they were not visible. They were displayed for a small fraction of a second, too short to be seen, but they were perceived nevertheless, by subconscious mind. And this way, they could affect and control people.

As I said, *Tommy*, the virus started as a prank and nobody could foresee that it would be extremely aggressive and sexually active. It multiplied proportionally to basic lending rate, that is by the rate the people were lending the program to each other. It also followed the Genetic and Darwinian laws of evolution, namely the "survival of the fittest". Yes, *Martina*, survival was the ability to escape the attention of antivirus programs, which were then already very efficient. True, the viruses were still rather primitive, but the main trick was to find the virus at all. Virus designers soon made the viruses which could transform slightly in every generation, so they were more immune to detection.

What's more, there were some viruses that could even modify their basic code, possessing something which was then called *artificial* - but by today's standards rather only superficial - *intelligence*. Virus *Serpent* was one of them. It could sit idle in the memory and continuously pick the weaknesses of program users from their dialogs. The virus then modified its subliminal messages and orders accordingly. It soon overtook the program commands and the results were catastrophic: people started to behave like fools or fell into depressions, which were driving them crazy anyway.

Now children, you may know from your history books about the age of artificial intelligence, which started when natural intelligence slowly left our planet. In the case of *Serpent*, it turned back into natural intelligence, which was then reborn again. First messages sent to users of *CELEST* were rather innocent and funny, because the virus noticed that people react positively in response to various jokes and anecdotes. At that stage, people started to laugh without really knowing why. That itself would not look too much abnormal, same way it is with you, *Roseann*. The first problems appeared when it started to flash on the screen black humor and later even some distasteful jokes. The public reaction was two-fold: while some people were disgusted, the others were visibly shaking with hidden joy.

Critical moment arrived when virus realized it can - as by hypnosis - really "program" most of humans. Monitors displayed invisible commands and orders which eventually lead to violence and crimes. People started to organize various cults and occults. Most of them were under the influence of electronic drugs at that time, which fortunately prevented the worldwide wars. The only action the governments did to correct the situation was closing of mental institutions, because they were overflowing. No, the fact that the really bad virus *Serpent* was behind it, was not yet known, *Kenny*.

They discovered it by chance only: one student in Frankfurt, SeaDeutche Republic, had bad video card in his computer and the subliminal message suddenly appeared visible on the screen. It didn't flash, it stayed there for good, or rather for bad, if you know what I mean. It happened while the student played the *CELEST* and the experts of *OPUKÁL* company were contacted. After several days of investigation, they discovered that the message "Go to Hell" wasn't originally designed for their game. The Chase Department of *WSP* (World Software Police) soon set their spyglasses on virus path and all world satellites were buzzing with warnings. It didn't help a bit: the virus was difficult to identify since each bulletin board, each computer and even each police computer had different version. Then they issued the worldwide order forbidding the use of the screen monitors, under the penalty of free subscription to the magazine *TIME-IS-MONEY* and/or incarceration. Well, incarceration is something like the jail I was already talking about, *Dave*.

So people started to use acoustic speakers, but it did not help a lot either: the search was progressing at slower pace and smart virus simply switched to *supersonic* subliminal messages, which were not audible. After *Serpent* penetrated the television, TV management decided to pull out majority of programs such as News, Sports and - yes, *Kathy* - even the fairy tales. Only programs left were the *Oompahpah* music and Heavy Metal, where the damages were almost negligible.

Electronic mail probably suffered most: *Serpent* was swearing at addressees, used 4-letter words in 8-bit ASCII and some text was even garbled. The CWW (Cosmic Wide Web) was of course completely paralyzed, while the OUS (Office of Useless Statistics) was issuing only optimistic forecasts.

If was really the fight for life. The most affected nets were put in digital quarantines, with even more messy results. One rather senile bureaucrat even ordered the chemical decontamination of Internet by SCFUN (Special Chemical Forces of United Nationalities). Everybody suspected everybody else was infected, son hated his own father, brother his own sister and *vice* his own *versa*. Then the rumors spread that it was genetic i.e. it could pass down to generations. People stopped multiplying and *Homo Sapiens* - that one especially - was threa tened with extinction.

Then it slowly cooled down: people stopped behaving crazy and the life went normal and dull again. People started to watch TV, some again subscribed to worldwide newspapers "3R Star" (Robbery, Rape and Revenue). The fairy tales appeared again - yes, even those for adults, from the Parliaments and Common Houses. People realized that something strange happened. Some believed that virus was so intelligent it ceased those shenanigans by itself. Even software experts had to adm it they did not have a clue - which was rather unusual on its own. No, *Patricia*, unusual was they admitted it.

At the end, the story became the common knowledge. It all happened in *Tanvald*, Bohemian Republic: there once upon a time lived one monk - he was called brother *Ambrosius* - in the monastery "At Spider's Web". As the name suggests, he was also computer buff and dilettante. His other hobby was decipherring of old parchments. Little did he know that they were already dec iphered, but that would be another story. One warm summer evening, the idea struck him like a hammersmith: it surely must be the work of devil! Well, the name *Serpent* was a good hint since the snake in paradise was actually the devil incarante or himself, so to say. Ambrosius then poked about his old parchments and finaly found the *Manual of exorcism, Vol. 3., Rev.7.* and there it was. No, *Frankie*, exorcism is not stamping out private property, that's called socialism. But let me fin ish my story.

Ambrosius sat behind the *kidboard* - I know, *Lucy*, but he called it kidboard all the same - then loaded his Antique Assembler, switched to Dusty Editor and his heavy hand slowly, but with firm determination, searched on the keyboard the letters of the exorcising routine:

A - P - A - G - E - - - S - A - T - A - N - A - S - !

He compiled it, saved it and then sprinkled few drops of holy water over the top of his monitor. Unfortunately, the water created the short on HV transformer and the screen went dark and dead. Brother Ambrosius went to bed rather disappointed and puzzled. But in the morning, when the water dried out - and after brother Servitus, the MMAM (Monastery Maintenance and Ambulance Man), changed all burned fuses - the monitor screen again shined with heavenly bright light. Even those indecent subliminal messages were visible, being no more subliminal nor indecent. Instead, the texts of prayers to St. Anthony of Padua appeared on the screen and the heavenly music was playing in the background the song "heaven, I'm in heaven . . ."

This version of the story was soon published by the magazine *Holy Macro*, but among the computer-addicted people the other, more realistic version was heard. It said that if you write APAGE SATANAS in ASCII, covert it into hex, remove parity code, turn it backwards, make few typing mistakes and repeat it x times, you get a small antivirus subroutine, which can attach to virus code, recursively multiply and eventually start to modify the DNA routine of the virus. Further virus reproduction then create mutants that are only malignant versions which in several generations simply turn suicidal and erase themselves from the memory.

But simple folks, who did not speak computerese, believed the first story and so the followers of brother Ambrosius were multiplying, in other words their numbers were steadily increasing. Soon he had to repeat his exorcism in front of TV cameras. During one demonstration, organized by CWTBC (Cosmicwide Television Broadcasting Corporation), an unfortunate accident happened. At the same moment he was sprinkling the holy water over computer monitor, brother Ambrosius touched with his other hand the ungrounded chassis. He sparkled all over his body and died instantly.

Two years afterwards, Ambrosius was beatified and when he died, he was canonized. No, it has nothing to do with artillery, *Bernie*, he was simply proclaimed the Saint. You can now talk to him via latest version of *SUPER-CELEST* or through little bit more expensive *CELEST-DE-LUXE* for extra heavy sinners . . .

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INCLINATIONS: THE LAP DOG
by Eva Lewitus

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was born in Usti n/Labem in the Sudetes in Czechoslovakia. Because of Hitler, she began to travel. After nearly 2 years in England, she finally landed in that blessed land of Peru. She has 3 sons, dispersed in this lovely world. All three of them have 3 children, that makes her a grandmother of 9. She started writing for her grandchildren and hasn't stopped. Her profession: photographer. Hobbies? Reading, writing and - no, not (a)'rithmetic - but gardening, music, photography, handicrafts, getting to know her computer, and above all, communicating with people.

She calls me *Lap dog*. Error: I am a *LapTop*. A triple supertwist *Display VGA Refurbished SHARP Personal Computer*. Anything else? Ah, yes, *PC-6200*.

I have a mind of my own. She calls it "Soul".

Up to now, I more or less did with her what I wanted. I had fun. I played the *Disappearing Act*. The *Garbled Print*. I made her life miserable with *Columns*. She had to learn a number of absolutely new words:

***Hardware* and, of course *Software*. *Font*, *Hard Disk*, which is not hard and I wonder if it is a disk. *Floppy Disk*. Floppy? In my *thesaurus* it says it means dangling, droopy, flaccid or hanging.**

Thesaurus is not in my *thesaurus* either.

***Default* was new to her too. She looked it up in her big dictionary and found it to mean to be rebellious, obstinate, perverse, and stubborn. In law it means a willful contempt and disobedience to any lawful summons. She says, that's exactly what it is, and what I am doing.**

She doesn't quite know what *Ctrl* and *Alt* means, but she uses it quite well by now.

Some of my keys she hasn't used up to now like *SysRq*, *ScrLk* and *PrtSc*.

I have lots of things in my memory , which she hasn't even tried.

I hardly remember anymore who put all those things into my memory. I do remember being bought by a young man and then given to her. There was another young man who taught her the first things about me. He really knew what he was doing. I wouldn't have dared to fool around with him. He would have returned me to where I came from. I didn't want that. I wasn't so young anymore and hadn't seen anything of this world. I was very glad to travel to a Spanish speaking country.

She writes a lot in Spanish.

It took her quite some time to learn to use the "ñ" (nh) and she doesn't yet know how to use the accent " ' ". I'm afraid she just has learned it!

She must have a split personality. Sometimes she signs her writings "Mutti" and sometimes "Eva".

I am safe just calling her "she".

In the beginning she experimented with *Hyphenation*. That was fun for me. When she went over one of her stories, I gave her the message: Not found: *WP{WP]US.HYC*. As she hadn't learned to BK, it was easy to have her story vanish. Twice she had to rewrite her narrative!

After the second disappearance, she called for help. A young friend of hers took me in hand.

He changed a few things.

He changed the cursor so it would be harder for it (me) to hide and make her look for it.

He showed her how to find vanished articles in other files.

He didn't find the *WP[WP]US.HYC*. either. He brought her one of his programs, instead of the US it was in Spanish. When she had copied it and looked at it, she had an attack of laughter. She couldn't make heads or tails of it either. It had flags and drawings, symbols and signs.

Well, well, she learned to use *Macros*. So I am having fun again. Some of the *Macros* she tries to recall don't. She doesn't know why. So she repeats *Define Macro* and *Macr Def*,... there she goes. She writes German now and needs the "ä", the "ö" and the "ü" She doesn't quite know what she did. But I do. I printed a whole page and would have even more of "ö"s if she hadn't stopped me. Then she got my message **Please Wait**.

She did. A long time. Till I wore down her patience. She tried *Enter*, she tried *Help*, even *Cancel*. I still told her to wait. "O.K.", she said, "erase my German letter." I tried but couldn't erase all of it. Anyway, she did the magic combination *Ctrl, Alt, Del*, and I had to stop whatever I was doing. Then she recalled the German letter I had left, tried the *Macro* for "ö" and there I went, writing the "ös" again and again. By now she had learned to control the *Macro*, by *Replacing* it. She still doesn't know how to Edit, but I have the feeling she will manage that too.

I felt the touch of the young man who taught her the first things. So now she learned to change the *Defaults*.

He tried to tell and show her all about *Shell*. Did she retain anything?

Hey, she starts playing with me, instead of me playing with her!

Wed.Oct.16,96

There, you see, she can put the date on anything she writes. Well, she got me a new companion, a *Modem*. Now she writes Pmails all over the place.

The "*On-Line Express 14.4 by BOCA Research Inc External Data and Fax Modem*" is a real buddy.

In the beginning, we played together with, no, against, her. Her *Pmails* disappeared.

By now she learned to find them in *Browse* using *f10* as if she always knew how to

handle these things.

She learned that she can't send *Pmails* if she has no phone line. She learned that she can't send *Pmails*, (though she can write them with me) if she forgot to put the electricity on. She learned that she can't send letters if she hasn't turned on the *Modem*.

The *Modem* found a trick that I hadn't thought off:

It stays stuck to the phone line, and she can't send anything. She can't receive anything. Nor does she have a phone.

She called the telephone company. they came, and found nothing wrong with their line!

Until she found out that she just has to shut off the *Modem*. She gets her phone line back, and can send new messages.

There's a friend of hers, in fact she has several now, that tell her what to do with my innermost soul.

She plays around with *exec.bat*, with *login*, and with all those lovely names. She edits and removes remiss and puts them in again.

She even sends *Fax*!

Tue.Oct.22,96

She wanted to send my Story to her family. She tried to move it from WP to her *Pmail*. That was my chance!

I locked it. Now she can't get to it, as she doesn't know her password! I think I'll have to give my opposition up. She just deleted the locked Story. - And goes on writing with a *BK*!

Somebody told her to do an *Attachmen t*. I just wonder if the *Receivers* will be able to read what she sent!

I'll have to be careful, or she'll get another Lap Dog. I read in her Emails, that her sons think she should get something better. Or quicker?

For her birthday.

Is there anything better than me? I've started to like her.

I hope her birthday is still a long, long way of.

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HURONTARIA - 17A/98



Canadian Czech- out Webzine Kanadsko-èeský obèasník.

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Commentary:

As I said here before, I like to browse the Net and this time, my attention was caught by the page trying to solve the famous mystery: was Shakespeare *Shakespeare* or wasn't he? It was noticed that Mr. S. - that is the man from Stratford whose name was S. - was so different from S. works, based of course on what we know about him, that we can only wonder why it was not already noticed during his life. In the last century, the suspicion strengthened and people were searching who could have possibly written S. works. They came up with famous actor and author of theatrical plays *Ben Johnson*, *Christopher Marlow* (also author of plays), *Sir Francis Bacon* and even *William Stanley* (the Sixth Earl of Derby). Those were the men - so far they didn't suspect any woman - with higher education, with good knowledge of Latin and Greek, persons who traveled a lot, were familiar with the life of royal court and naturally had some talent to write plays and poems - in sum, with all those qualities which could not possibly develop in man of Stratford. The trouble was that none of them completely fit the frame.

Then English schoolmaster *J. Thomas Looney* discovered the person with all those characteristics: *Edward de Vere*, the 17th Earl of Oxford, who lived from 1550 till 1604. There was of course one problem, our Earl died 12 years before S. did and several S. plays would have to be written post mortem. Looney didn't have many proofs, they came in 1984, when *Charlton Ogburn* wrote his book (rather thick - I couldn't make myself to read the second half of it) **The Mysterious William Shakespeare**. I admit that several facts there are very convincing - he explains how confusing can be the dating of S. plays, whose topics were not original - they even look like being rewritten, even copied. Also the fact, that Earl could not use his real name, since he very often ridiculed the court of queen Elizabeth, sounds acceptable.

The page <http://www2.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shakespeare/> will tell you all this and much more. There are arguments for both sides, that is the *Stratfordian* side (for

Mr.S.) and the *Oxfordian* side (for de Vere). The puzzle of course stays unresolved, because, as Al Austin says in his article:

"Those who believe de Vere was Shakespeare must accept an improbable hoax as part of it, a conspiracy of silence involving, among others, Queen Elizabeth herself. Those who side with the Stratford man must believe in miracles."

P hotogallery: I have started the independent attachment to Hurontaria for those, who think we don't have enough pictures. You can find it [here](#).

The indexa: For those of you who are painfully trying to load old issues of Hurontaria, I have one good advice: wait till next issue, we have a surprise for you. . .

IN DEX:

A - ENGLISH PART

Other Dimensions: INTERVIEW WITH GEORGE B. KOSZEGI

Life: THE YESMEN

Short Story: THE WORRISOME STORY

Inclinations: THE RHYMELESS

Note: Part B is in Czech, and the content is different. For Part B, please go back to [Title Page](#).



Chuckey's Paradigms and Paradoxes:

"Me and my wife, we have a joint account in our bank. It means we go fifty-fifty: I put money in, she takes them out."

Please send me a mail to my address below; your comments will be appreciated. If you want to receive announcement of the new issue by mail, add the word SUBSCRIBE. Novelty: we can send you English issue by e-mail, you can then read it by browser off-line. Add in your letter words SEND HTML We would also appreciate if you let us know where did you learn about Hurontaria.

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OTHER DIMENSIONS: INTERVIEW WITH GEORGE B. KOSZEGI

GEORGE B. KOSZEGI
koszeglg@cadvision.com

is the director of **Y2000 Millenium Solutions**. This Calgary located company was formed to respond to the *Year 2000 problem*. He and his partner *Lorne Key* (also director) attended the **Viasoft** headquarters in Phoenix, Arizona, where they received training and certification as level #1 support for the *OnMark 2000* suite of products. Along with distribution of these products and combined computer experience, they are able to provide complete Year 2000 remediation services for their customers. The company homepage is on <http://www.cadvision.com/koszeglg/>

NOTE: Viasoft Inc., the leader in Y2000 solutions, won Editor's Choice Award of Software Magazine. Viasoft's OnMark 2000 software was successfully used by many companies.

From: George Koszegi
To: Jan Hurych
Subject: Re: interview for Hurontaria
Date: October 23, 1998

JAN:

The public media made quite a noise about the "Year 2000" problem and then suddenly they behave like everything is O.K. What we lack now is the honest expert information: how serious it is (for companies and home users as well), who should be concerned and what should we do?

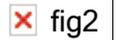
Mr. KOSZEGI:

I believe that the Year 2000 problem is very serious however it effects different users differently. Companies will generally be more severely impacted by the problem because they use software applications that utilize dates in calculations. In order to understand how a computer will be effected by the problem, we have to understand the problem itself.

The Y2000 problem can be divided into four parts:

1) Computer Hardware - the ability of the computer BIOS to enable the system to move past December 31, 1999 and operate in the Year 2000. Also to ensure that when the computer reboots, it will maintain the Year 2000 date.

2) Operating Systems - all operating systems are not compliant, see *Fig.2*. It should be noted that Windows 98 is Year 2000 compliant as specified by the manufacturer.

 fig2

3) Software Applications - the software applications must be deemed Y2000 compliant, which means that they can calculate and process 4-digit dates. Of primary concern are all data bases and spreadsheets. Keep in mind that even non calculating programs are cause for alarm i.e. word processors if the data in the word processor is going to be transferred or used in any calculating program i.e. data bases and/or spreadsheets.

4) Data - this issue is extremely important because you can have non-compliant data in a Year 2000 compliant application.

Even though each aspect of the problem is fixed differently, each component effects one another . In order for a computer to work properly, all four areas must be compliant.

It is important to note that different users will be effected differently. Your average home user that uses a word processor and accesses the internet should ensure that their hardware and operating system are compliant. As the user uses more complex software, more of their systems will have to be tested. The major issue for business is to ensure that they do not lose their business data or have their data corrupted by a non compliant application.

JAN:

I understand there are three areas of concern: the computers as such, system programs and application programs. From that point, everything seems to be very specific. How can we see the light at the end of the tunnel?

Mr. KOSZEGI:

By taking a systematic approach and testing each system a person can determine their compliance very quickly. Our consulting company conducts an initial assessment th at

provides a complete report along with budget for complete Year 2000 compliance. Therefore the customer can determine the total cost of their project. At the end of the process the customer receives a report outlining all of the steps taken in order to become Year 2000 compliant. This report is very important for auditing purposes.

JAN:

Problem "Year 2000" is actually a time-bomb, if you pardon the pun. Could there be any more surprises in the future? After all, there was a talk about new calendar, different number of working days in a week, new holidays, etc. which may affect at least some accounting programs.

Mr. KOSZEGI:

Yes there could be some surprises because of the points you outlined and because many applications employ *windowing techniques* to resolve the Y2000 problem.

COTS (Commercial Off-The-Shelf) Applications (see Fig.3.)



Some commercially available applications that are year 2000-compliant may be affected anyway. Many of these applications continue to allow a user to input a year as two digits for convenience, yet the software must convert this information to a four-digit date. In most cases, these applications incorporate a windowing algorithm in order to determine the appropriate century. Windowing is a technique in which the century is determined by a "pivot" year value or cusp. As two-digit dates are encountered, the software compares those dates with the cusp value and inserts the appropriate century information. For example, if the cusp value is 50, then any two-digit dates from 50 to 99 will be interpreted as 1950 to 1999, and 00 to 49 will be interpreted as 2000 to 2049. While the windowing technique can be an effective mechanism for resolving the year 2000 problem in COTS and end-user applications, it can also cause confusion. Many different applications, as well as different versions of the same applications, use different cusp values as the basis of their windowing algorithms. So dates interpreted as falling within the 1900s in one application could be interpreted as 2000s within another.

JAN:

Thank you very much on behalf of our readers and let me wish you a success in your endeavors.

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LIFE: THE YESMEN (First published in *Kanadské Listy, Neviditelný Pes*)

In English speaking countries, they call them "*yesmen*" - the people who say "yes" to everything, people without any principle at all. If you happened to be their boss or if they just feel that they may ever need you, you get their approval without any problem.

Of course, that is not just a specialty of the western world, yesmen are as old as the mankind itself. It is like a ballroom dancing couple: one is following and the other one is leading. In other words: the bootlicker and the bootwearer. Their harmony is total: to be a yesman, one does not need to know anything or to achieve anything. It is the best way to get promotion and to bypass the others, who obviously do have some moral rules or weak stomach for this kind of symbiosis. Symbiosis, which profits both parties: the parasite and his master. It's so easy to understand . . .

Well, it is not. There are always some people, who don't understand or pretend not to understand. They risk unpopularity, even persecution by their superiors and they lightheartedly throw away their future carrier. Why? I guess we can mainly blame their education, their utopistic ideas that men a women should be judged by their abilities and achievements alone. They want to have their own opinions, the opinions which are not bought or borrowed, the opinions they can believe in and stand behind, worth fighting for and sometimes even dying for. Yes, there is still the minority of people, who like to think about things and ideas independently, who believe more in truth than in authority.

The states with dictatorships are raising their yesmen by feeding them enough fertilizer, be it money or indoctrination, when there is not enough cash. In democracies, it is a little bit more complicated: the yesmen are on their own and they have to compete and survive thanks to the *Darwinian theory of the fittest*. This leads to many new mutations, very colorful and predatory indeed. I have already written about *political correctness*, but that is nothing compared with this breed. Don't be mistaken however, yesmen are not driven to brown-nosing by their profit only - they are the *social sign of our times*. The society, where one person is an *omnipotent manager* and the others have seldom opportunity to say any critical words without being reprimanded, fired or silenced - such society needs yesmen bad ly. With managers, who often are yesmen themself and can hardly manage anything on their own, the system wouldn't work without the approval of the choir boys. It's a historical fact: our industrial revolution - which is not over yet - requires all kinds of energy, including so called "mental" energy, that is encouragement and enthusiasm which sometimes replace the logic and pure reason.

The slogan of the day is: "Don't leave for tomorrow what you can do today!" This saying somehow never caught the hearts of cautious Czechs, who immediately came

with another slogan: "The morning is wiser than evening" probably to provide them with good alibi. Being practical people, they use both sayings, but not always to their best advantage. Like other Europeans, they like to study the potential problems before accepting any solution - while Americans like to do things quickly and with great optimism. When I came to America and worked for them, I considered their attitude rather lighthearted and risk-taking. Som etimes I even wondered if they take my worries and well meant advices seriously.

Similarly - or rather quite opposite - seem Europeans to Americans. They consider them too cautious or even troublemakers. My boss told me quite openly that he did not understand why I always had to disagree with him. As you can see, he took it rather personally - managers always do. "It is actually quite simple, Jack, " I troed to joke, "I've read that if two agree on something very often, one of them is rather supe rfluous. And I want you to need me, you know. After all, you can get yesman for two dollars an hour, if you need one."

He laughed and at the end, we both learned something: I gave him my suggestions in very small doses and he pretended to agree with them. Well, I learned not to push my luck too much, because when I happened to be right, he was mad at me instead at his own ignorance. It is not surprising that in democratic countries people give up their right of free speech, either from utilitaria nism, indolence or the lack of courage. The result is shortage of good ideas and partial stagnation, which is the major problem the managers are facing today.

So they had to find the solution and they did: the manager is no more *boss* but rather *a leader*, a person who is supposed to lead and inspire, while the working problems are solved by "*the team*". The twilight of managerism brought the new term: the *teamwork*. Of course, even the work in team needs certain agreement by employees and requires the necessary enthusiasm and discipline. The team is not just any group - the membership in team must be *well deserved*. Here comes the acid test of all yesmen: the knows-it-all boss, the object of their admiration and adulation, is no more. And while they cannot prove their value in the team - because they don't have any - they try to blacken the others and it shows very soon. The chameleons turn into white rhinos and their game is over. The *true and voluntary agreeme nt* returns back where it belongs. After all, one can agree even with criticism, if it is *not selfish* and if it is, of course, *constructive*.

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SHORT STORY: THE WORRISOME STORY

First, let me confess: I worry a lot, frequently, sincerely and wholeheartedly. And what's more - I haven't met so far another *worrier*, who could possibly outworry me. I worry vertically and laterally, in quantity as well as in quality.

I just can't help it; when it comes to expectations, I am colorblind: I can see only black. White or grey is somehow invisible for me. It is like looking in photoalbum with no pictures, just negatives. Still, I do not consider myself to be a pessimist. On the contrary, you may call me *progressive optimist*: I claim the things are not so bad, they could be worse. And they usually will. On the other hand, when they don't turn that bad, that's when the optimism comes to play. All this sophistry works nicely for me; it just happens that it also drives my wife crazy.

There are many things around me which drive her crazy, but my worrying is apparently the top of the list. First she tried to comfort me, telling me that I shouldn't take things so seriously. "You must not worry all the time," she said. "Of course," was my answer, "but if I stop worrying, I'd probably die from suspense. You see, if I have nothing to worry, that's because there is some other disaster in progress, the disaster I don't know nothing about. That would worry me even more..."

The other thing is that when I start to worry, I just cannot stop. I am afraid that if I stop worrying, I might spoil the things. When it is over, that's a different story, then I stop bothering myself - at least with the old worries, because I have plenty of new ones. So you see, it is not over even when it is over. It is never over.

"This way," said my dearest wife, "you may never stop worrying; not while you are still alive." She was right, of course.

"But tell, me," I said, "if I don't worry, who will? Nobody will worry so well as I do. It is a great responsibility, you know.

"True, " she agreed, " now I see it quite clearly: if you stop worrying, the things will go berserk. But on the other hand, if you do worry, they still go berserk. So what is the point?"

"Well, they may go berserk but not that much berserk," I replied, trying to hide my doubts.

"But you are not sure. On the other hand, if you stop bothering, they may even go less berserk, don't you think so?" she asked.

"No way, impossible," I denied it any chance. "After all, that would prove that I was wrong all the time - well most of the time, " I tried to soften my denial.

"Why cannot you be wrong?" she asked with irony. "Or is it that you can, you just won't admit it?"

"I would admit it, if I was wrong - which, of course, I seldom am," I insisted.

She would not have it. And next time, when I started my laments about possibly losing my job, about future looking bleak and gloomy, she came up with her plan. "Well," she asked, "would it make you to stop worrying if you knew exactly what is going to happen?"

"Sure," I nodded since I didn't see the trap, "then I would not worry at all! "

"Good", she said, "go and see the fortuneteller."

"Come on, " I objected, " you know I don't believe in those things!"

"You don't need to believe it important thing is they work."

"But how do I know she is right?" I asked, wavering. "You will never know, but I am telling you: it works. Our neighbor, Mrs. Bradbury, she saw one of those fortunetellers in Toronto and she told her her husband is not true to her."

"Why would the fortuneteller husband's fidelity interest Mrs. Bradbury?" I asked.

"No, silly, Mr. Bradbury was cheating on her."

"Why would Mr. Bradbury cheat on fortuneteller?"

"But he didn't cheat on her!"

"So who was he cheating on?" I wondered.

"On his wife, I mean Mrs. Bradbury," explained my wife.

"But we all know he is cheating, she needn't have to go to fortuneteller, I would tell her myself, " I laughed.

"How come you knew it and didn't tell me?" asked my wife.

"You wouldn't be interested, darling," I assured her. "After all, it was none of our business."

"Who was she cheating with?" asked my wife. I told her and we lost our original subject completely.

Next day, I remembered our conversation and asked my wife, who was that fortuneteller. "I do not know," said she, "but I can ask Mrs. Bradbury. Have you decided to go here?"

"Why not, I am curious how much accurate that lady can be. I will ask her straight questions and will demand straight answers."

"Then you get nowhere," explained my wife, "You just cannot push it your way. The lady has to be in special mental state, on *higher level*, as they call it."

"I doubt if she needs all that for reading the pack of cards," I said.

"That lady is using crystal ball, no cards. She is able to see the things over there," she informed me.

"What things? Like ghosts and vampires?" I laughed.

"Things," she said, "but you wouldn't understand."

"I doubt if she would. But I will go there all the same," I decided.

"Another thing," said my wife. "You have to believe her."

"No problem," I assured her, "I will keep my valet in my bottom pocket."

"You know what I mean. And you mustn't laugh," she warned me.

"O.K., I promise I will not laugh. Not until the future proves her wrong."

Finally, I have got the name and address: Madame So and So, Labelle, Some Street, Number So and so, Toronto downtown. There was no way back: I had promised so I had to go. Next Saturday, I drove to downtown, my head full of smart questions. They were smart all right: I actually spent some time before, trying to figure them out, and I almost memorize them. Well, almost - you see, I didn't need to: I had this system of mnemonics, which is rather complicated to explain it here, but believe me, it works. So I already knew my first question and second question - if she answers the first one positively - and another one - if she answers negatively - and so on. "Homework," my father used to say, "homework is everything!" And he might have been right, if he ever stuck to that rule himself.

Armed with the piece of paper, bearing name and address of the fortuneteller, I drove downtown. By the way, why do they call them fortunetellers? Are they supposed to tell only the good things? After all, there should be also some misfortune tellers, don't you think so?

One misfortune actually happened to me right there, even before I had a time to look at the paper: it was pretty windy and gust of wind, strong as it was, stole the paper from me. It carried the paper far away and soon I lost track of it. There I was, starting my important tour with no information whatsoever. Well, there were some fractions still left in my memory, but let me put it this way: I should have memorized the address instead of my questions. . .

Why? First problem became obvious when I tried to recollect the name of the street: was it Queen or King? There are both there, you know, and they run parallel to each other. Both of them are also few kilometers long. The number of the house would be quite helpful, but as it was, I only remembered that it had four digits. That of course meant that I would have to search 9999 numbers or rather twice that number, since both streets had also East and West directions, so each number appeared twice. Multiply that by two again, since I would have to search both streets, if I choose the wrong one first. . .

Rather discouraged, I started with the first one, the King St. - after all I had to start

somewhere. For some obscure reason, I figured out that walking toward the lower numbers will get me closer to my target. The day was still young, the sun was shining and there was nothing else I could do anyway. Sure, I could call my wife, but she was not home at that time and besides, I would have to admit I lost that paper. I seriously thought about it, especially after I passed about fifty houses with no particular luck. Then my pride won: after all, only 9949 houses left, whole 0.5 percent checked a lready! Than I remembered from the past, that that highest number in downtown was more like 5 thousand and I was already near 2000, great!

After another hour, my legs started to feel the stress, so I decided to walk slower, trying to save the energy while I couldn't save on anthing else. After two hours, I reached the numbers around 1000, still without any luck.

Now you may ask how could I recognize the right place anyway. Well, I used ingenuity: if it was a butcher shop or bookstore, it was automatically out. The others I sort of sorted out and some obscure signs I simply discarded by default. Besides, I knew that there must be some billboard, address plate or something which will give me at least a hint . . .

Finally, when I was almost giving up hope, my luck turned around. Near some flashy go-go club, there was a small building, rather inconspicuous, with big red light and large sign "*Message Parlor*" or something like that, anyway. "Eureka!" I said with Archimedes, "Here it is". Again, my association process worked all right: *the messages* were obviously those from future, and *parlo, parlare* is Italian (or Latin?) for talking. Little gymnastics with those meanings and there you have it: *Fortune Telling*.

Feeling happy that I solved the puzzle, I rang the bell. It took a whole but then the smartly dressed lady, more in the summer rather than the spring of her life, opened the door. She had too much make-up for my taste, but that is probab ly normal with fortune tellers, I thought.

"What can I do you *forrr*?" she asked, with slightly French accent.

" Well -". I was confused by her appearance and suddenly stuttered: " I am looking for Madame, Madame, Ma -" As you probably guessed, I couldn't even remember the name of the lady in question.

" *Me oui, je suis Madame,*" she interrupted me and repeated her question: "What can I do you *forrr*?"

"Well," I was somehow at loss what would be proper t o say - after all, it was my future

which was at stake. "Actually, you see, I was sent here by my wife . . ."

"*Oh mon chouchou, mon bébé,*" she laughed, but there was some compassion in her voice. "It is *that* bad, eh?"

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INCLINATIONS: THE RHYMELESS

(The verses i n prose)

THE RHYMELESS.

She had such a difficult name, too difficult to put in rhymes: Elizabeth. Don't misunderstand me - not that it couldn't be rhymed with anything, it just didn't come out right, it was either funny or offensive, that's all.

Like : Betty - jetty - petty - sweaty, and if that is not enough, try "spaghetti". So I wrote her a poem in prose instead.< BR>"But where are the rhymes?" she asked. "I do not see any!"

I had to admit that much, there was no way to hide it.

I also explained to her that I just could not find proper rhymes and since she wouldn't be willing to change her name, the *verses in prose* was the only solution. "There are verses without rhymes, you know, the poetry written the new, innovative way," I said. She thought about it for a while and finally asked: "But it is still a poetry, I hope?"

THE FLO RIST GIRL.

I was buying flowers for my wife - using my credit card, of course. The girl florist smiled and said: "Sign it here, please. And may I have your telephone number?"

Gladly, I wrote it down, but could not help a comment: "But don't forget to call me after nine o'clock, when my wife is not at home."

People in the store laughed - luckily for me, because without them, she probably wouldn't have guessed I was

only joking. And that may be the reason, why she never called me . . .

MY FAMOUS SUSPENDERS.

There was a visit of TV crew in our company, but I hardly noticed them - I never do. Later, people told me they saw me on TV. Actually not me - I was standing with my back to the camera - but they all recognized my famous - and I dare to say, original - suspenders.

All people saw me, all except me. Nobody knew it was me, but they all recognized my suspenders, so they correctly judged it was me. I was on TV and I haven't even seen myself - or rather my suspenders, to be accurate. It was so frustrating: all they ever saw and talked about were my suspenders.

Come to think of it, they would never get on TV screen without myself, their owner! I decided to give my suspenders a lesson: I am going to put them in the closet and not to wear them any more.

WE ARE NOT AT HOME.

We bought the automatic answering machine for our telephone. Well, don't try to ask it anything, it is really not *answering* any questions, it only repeats the taped message. The facts like "We are not at home, but if you wish", etc., etc.

I decided I should tape the most original message of them all. And here it is: "Dear friends, if you want to talk to me, let me assure you that you have got the right number, but in wrong time. Please call me again, preferably when I am at home. Thank you for your call."

Believe me, it is a great thing, this modern convenience called answering machine. Without it, people wouldn't even know that I am not at home!

ANNETTE.

She introduced herself as Anette. "My family name is not important," she said, "I am going to change it pretty soon, anyway."

"I understand, " I said, "you are going to get married."

"Oh no, no, "she explained, "I am going to get a divorce."

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HURONTARIA - 18A/98



Canadian Czech-out Webzine Kanadsko-èeský obèasník.

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Commentary:

It's coming soon - of course, I mean Christmas and so we prepared **a little Christmas gift** for you, too: **the whole year of Hurontaria (1998), zipped into one file** only, which you can download from the **Title Page of Hurontaria** (click on the white row, it takes about 4 min.) and which you can then unzip on your disk and read it (and print it) off line.

Oh, you don't have an unzipper? No problem, we prepared for you the program called Free zip© with kind permission of the author, Mr. D. Stanislawek from Australia (his page is [here](#)). You can download Freezip© from **our Title page** (it takes about 3 min.). You don't know how? Well, you just click on the right spot and the pop-up menu will ask you, where do you want it. The rest is in the **manual**, which is [here](#).

If you do not have enough confidence, ask somebody to help you. If you do not have anybody to help you, just write to us and we will send you the whole file, which will unzip itself, by e-mail. The reading however, you have to do on your own . . .

Changes: On Title Page, you probably noticed few modifications - we added the date of last issue (= last modified) and approx. date of the next issue. We erased some introductions, added the issue colors, shortened the issue names and added the arrow, pointing to the last issue. Now don't tell me that you don't know if you saw it already - doesn't your browser change the color of the link after you clicked on it?

We hope that Hurontaria will be still your favourite webzine in the future and that you will recommend us to your friends and those of you who don't like us - to their enemies. Your letters are dear to us: we gained many new friends who, like us, believe that Net should be used mainly for exchange of interesting ideas and to provide good entertainment. So see you again in the year 1999 and in the meantime, we wish you and your family:

VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

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Note: Part B (or C) is in Czech, and the content is different. For Part B (or C), please go back to [Title Page](#).



Chuckey's Paradigms and Paradoxes:

"No, I am not obese, I am just too short for my weight."

SEND me a mail to my address below; your comments will be appreciated. If you want to receive announcement of the new issue by mail, add the word **SUBSCRIBE**. Novelty: we can send you English issue by e-mail, you can then read it by browser off-line. Add in your letter words **SEND HTML A**. We would also appreciate if you let us know where did you learn about Hurontaria.

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Webmaster Jan (call me Honza)

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OTHER DIMENSIONS: INTERVIEW WITH Dr. IVAN HAJEK

IVAN HAJEK, PhD., CSc.

hajek@biomed.cas.cz

born in Prague (now Czech Republic) in 1937. After high school entered *Faculty of Natural Science of Charles University* in Prague, graduated in 1960 as MSc. (specialized in Animal Physiology, thesis on temperature regulation in bats). PhD student in Institute of Physiology, Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, thesis (on protein metabolism of neuromuscular apparatus after the disruption of peripheral nerve) defended in 1965. Postgraduate work : *Department of Biochemistry, University of Birmingham*, England (1966-67), then Research Scientist in Institute of Physiology till 1984.

In the meantime visits to laboratories in USSR, Poland, W. Germany, Canada, USA. 1973-76: *Senior Lecturer, Dept. Biochemistry, Makerere University*, Kampala, Uganda. 1978: *member of Expedition Africa-Wildlife* (field work in Toro Game Reserve, Uganda on game census). 1984-95: Institute of Physiological Regulations and Inst. of Experimental Medicine, **Czech Academy of Sciences** (pain research, membrane receptors, proteins, nucleic acids, enzymology). 1995: back to Inst. Physiology (circadian rhythmicity in man, sleep research) Main hobby: ecology of Africa.

Papers published: over 160 (incl. abstracts), coauthor of **monography** on Ecological aspects of Toro Game Reserve in Uganda. **Honours:** 3 Academy Awards (muscle physiology and biochemistry), 1 Price of Academy (for ecology). Married, wife Zlata (PhD in entomology, now retired), daughter Vera (MSc. in civil engineering), son Martin (Faculty of Education, now in Faculty of Philosophy: Hebrew and cuneiform studies).

From: Dr. Ivan Hájek

To: Jan Hurych

Subject: Re: interview for Hurontaria

Date: November 24, 1998

JAN:

I will start with something that I wanted to do for long time now. We are all aware of the success which was achieved in Roslin Institute, Scotland, that is the cloning of the sheep. We read about it in newspapers, but I never had an opportunity to ask an expert, till now: What is your opinion about their work and the cloning in general?

Dr. HAJEK:

According to my opinion both cloning and genetic manipulations are very promising techniques with an impact on many aspects of human life. Introduction of certain genes could lead to elimination of diseases in man, animals and plants. By means of cloning we would be able to increase the productivity of farm animals by increasing the number of individuals with useful characteristics. Cloning could be also used for conservation of many endangered animal species by increasing the number of animals living in captivity (see also the role of zoos), resulting stock could be later on used for reintroduction into the former habitats (e.g. rhinos).

JAN:

There is also a lot of talk about cloning or further development of animal proteins and animal organ transplants in human medicine. Again: what is the scientific point of view?

Dr. HAJEK:

Many products of genetic manipulations e.g. human proteins as hormones, blood substitutes and even human tissues cultivated in vitro for transplantation will be produced in very near future. While this is not my field of expertise, there is some involvement of the Institute of Physiology of Domestic Animals (Czech Academy of Sciences), and certain progress was achieved already. However, there is still a lot of work to be done in laboratories and later on in clinical research.

JAN:

Back to your previous stay in Africa. You were obviously pretty busy there: you were lecturing at the university, participated in the wildlife expedition and even authored the publication about it. Did you ever had an opportunity to go to real safari or help catching some animals for zoos?

Dr.HAJEK:

While in Uganda, I took part in conservation activities of Makerere University, Dept. of Zoology, where my wife worked as a Part-time Lecturer in Entomology, and also in dept. of Geography. Being interested in wildlife, the whole family including children (8 and 3 yrs old) visited repeatedly all National Parks in Uganda and many other protected areas. We also organized one really big safari (over one month) that started in Kampala - we crossed Lake Victoria on the boat, then we continued with our car through the most famous parks in Northern Tanzania: Serengeti, Ngorongoro, Manyara, Arusha, Tsavo to

Mombasa in Kenya. On the way back we visited Nairobi, Nakuru, Naivasha and finally reached Kampala.

Later on I participated in real hunting safaris, when other batch of Czechoslovak colleagues arrived, who were hunters even here in Czechoslovakia. They were fascinated by the possibility to hunt for big game. However, I have never shot anything, being always on the protection side! But, with my zoo logical background I worked in hunting parties as ranger, I skinned the animals, prepared trophies and I was also cook and driver. By organizing our safaris, I made friends with many officials in Game Department.

After returning back home I came into contact with a group of former colleagues biologists who had the same inclinations towards nature conservation. We organized an expedition to Uganda in 1978 to help Uganda with a specific problem - decline of population of one species of antelope in *Toro Game Reserve* in western Uganda. Ten specialists from different branches of natural science and film specialists worked for 2 months in the field. We performed game census and supplied Uganda with necessary recommendations to solve the problem (Toro later became a new National Park). During our stay we also shot several films. In 1984 the whole lot of our results was published as a monograph by the Academy of Sciences.

JAN:

I visited two safari style zoos in Canada (one in Quebec, the other one in Ontario) and I was very much impressed. In spite of their scientific and public values however, safari zoos still do not have enough support and have financial problems. Could you tell us where di the idea of safari zoos originate and what do you think lays ahead for them in the future - in competition with the "classical" zoos?

Dr. HAJEK:

Still during my first stay in Uganda, I met *Dr. Vagner*, the director of Safari Zoo in Eastern Bohemia. He and his son Zdenek were catching animals for safari style as well as for ordinary zoos in Europe. I had the chance to participate several times in their activities. It was quite an experience. Their safari zoo is now quite famous for large groups of African antelopes, zebras, giraffes and rhinos. I am not sure where the idea of safari zoos started, but I think it is a great thing. Classical zoos may be cheaper to operate, but both types are very important for many reasons. They educate public and they serve as reservoirs of animals that may be already endangered in their former homes. When the situation will become more favourable, animals might come back again - I hope!

JAN:

Thank you very much on behalf of our readers and let me wish you a success in your future endeavors.

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LIFE: THE STORY OF ADRIANA
(as told by Analena de Colmenarez, Venezuela)

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was born in Sao Paulo, Brazil. She studied Psychology and when the military regime closed the universities, she specialized in heart surgery as the nurse-instrumentalist. She met her future husband, who came from Venezuela to Brazil, to finish his Master's Degree in surgery. They got married and both went to Venezuela, to start their new life. They moved to Maracaibo and that's where their children were born - Adriana, Vivian and Ricardo Jr. Her husband is the surgeon, working in three local hospitals and also the president of the Yacht Club. And yes, they have a sailboat and they both like sailing so much that they are spending most of their free time on Maracaibo Lake.

But that's not all: Analena teaches Portuguese classes, while on the other hand taking some in English and even has time for reading books - she especially likes Russian literature. She even took courses in aromatic products and opened a shop with perfumes, candles, soaps, called *Analena Satchets*. She loves music, namely that of Smetana and Russian classics. She is level headed, but intuitive, sensitive - sometimes even melancholic, friendly and of course a good hostess - she likes to organize the social events. And if that's not enough, she also writes for their *Writer's Club* magazine and is preparing the book about her daughter Adriana.

The year was 1995. Young girl, named *Adriana*, left her town - Maracaibo in Venezuela - to study in faraway country, almost halfway around the world. She was beautiful and not just in her mother's eyes: she had silky hair, beautiful eyes and - as other girls of her age, 18 years old - she laughed a lot and looked forward to the life which was ahead of her. The life with expectations and beautiful dreams. We all have them when we are young . . .

She was gifted, too, that's why she was leaving to study in Czech Republic. Actually, she was a part of the student interchange: she was chosen by *AFS* and another girl, from Island, took her place in her mother's house in Venezuela. What is *AFS*? It is an

International Youth Interchange program, a non-profit organization, neutral in the political and religious respect. It works in 54 countries, and its goal is teaching a dignity, empathy, tolerance and harmony in living together with other people as well as respecting being different.

Why did Adriana go that far? And why to Czech Republic? Well, she learned a little bit about the country and with a great excitement, she chose to see that historical and cultural center of Central Europe. She was located with Czech family in Plzen, *Bohemia*, which is the western half of Czech Republic.

Sure, her mother *Analena* was concerned: her child being sent so far and away, for such a long time and the first time in her life. Besides, what did they really know about the place? Maybe the people there are actually very cold and without emotions. Adriana of course had no worries and so she said good-bye to her mother and left. Time flew fast and the first letters from Adriana were encouraging: she already made some friends, she liked her studies and everything looked O.K. "Luckily, we didn't make mistake," thought Analena, "my girl is happy and that is all what counts."

Six months passed like the water under the bridge and suddenly the faxletter arrived from *Prague*, the capital of Czech Republic - Adriana was sick and she was in the hospital. Analena, full of worries about her daughter, arrived there three days later. The diagnosis was already confirmed: Adriana had a lung tumor and it was malignant. They called it *Hodgkins lymphoma*, not too revealing description, but they both knew better: it was serious, very serious. . .

When such thing happens to an old person, it is of course very sad, but even more so when the victim is a young girl, still more child than adult. Adriana's life, most of which was still ahead of her, was now seriously endangered and her chances were bad. Doctors immediately started chemotherapy. All that time, Analena was at her daughter's bed, taking care for her child, arranging all what should or could be done and praying to God for Adriana's health. It wasn't just Analena who was praying - soon all Adriana's friends and even people from different places of the world were praying with her.

It was not easy for the desperate mother: she was in the foreign country, far from the rest of her family which could comfort her, ease her sorrows and worries. Nobody could give her any assurances, but she was still trying to gather some hope. All that time she had to hide her worries and pass some optimism on Adriana, while her daughter was hiding her doubts from her mother, too. Life was not easy and God was testing them both. Not the first time though: Analena's son, Ricardo jr. was killed in a road accident, when he was

only five years old.

True, there were also some bureaucrats, who made Analena's life miserable, like a lady manager from student's lodgings (kolej). She rudely told Analena - who temporarily stayed there - that "this is not the place for tourists", without offering the poor woman any further help. So poor mother - who didn't speak Czech at all - had to find herself an apartment. It was quite far from all the students who used to help her in her ordeal, from compassionate young people waiting for her arrival from the hospital, late at night. Every night then, tired and depressed after all those hours spent with Adriana in the hospital, she had to return to the cold, solitary apartment. It was a lonely place, which of course reminded her even more about the reality, about her daughter's misfortune. The only comfort was that it was near Charles Square, close to Katerinska Street where the hospital was.

Charles' Square which is named after Czech king and Roman emperor *Charles IV*, had a nice park where students, doctors and other people spent their break time and sat on benches, munching their lunches. Analena sometimes rested there and watched young people around: they looked optimistic and generally happy. Why must have all that happen to *her* daughter? And why *here*, so far away from her home? Maybe, if she could only bring her back . . .

The other people however felt with her: they felt sympathy and were sorry for the suffering of both, Adriana and Analena. Not just students, who knew her daughter, even ordinary people in the hospital, common people around, all those people who understood, who had a heart. Analena could never forget their kindness because without them, her stay there would have been unbearable. Little help here and there made a big difference - it made all the difference. She was not alone any more and that feeling helped her most of all. "They were great," she claims today and there is no reason not to believe her.

Prague is also the city of *Holy Bambino di Praga* (Prazske Jezulatko), the miraculous statuette of little Jesus, very famous in South America and located in one of Prague churches, *Santa Maria La Victoria* in Karmelitska Street. Analena went to the church, knelt before the altar and frightened and crying, she prayed for help. Suddenly, gentle hand touched her shoulder. It was a Czech nun, trying to help her. Analena asked for a priest, who could speak Spanish or Portuguese. No such luck - the only one available was Italian priest, but "if she waits till next Saturday, the one who lives in the country, may come and . . ." She couldn't wait, it was just before the Adriana's operation.

Disappointed, she returned to the hospital, back to Adriana, who happened to have some visitors there. Incredible enough they were three missionaries from Spain, one of them actually the priest. He was the one who was supposed to say the mess in that church on

Saturday! It was almost like he was sent to Analena by Bambino di Praga, feeling sorry for the suffering mother - it was like another miracle! Surely with all this, there was still some hope . . .

All that time, she realized that she was living in the city she heard so much already. About its medieval beauty, its parks, palaces, churches and also about the historical castle *Hradcany*, the seat of Czech kings and queens, who for centuries ruled that little country. And of course the famous *Charles' Bridge*, built by the same Charles IV in the fourteen century. It was the place from where you can see it all: the bridge, framed with two Gothic towers and a row of baroque statues of saints, including Czech *Saint Juan de Nepomuceno*, the castle and all. No, Analena didn't have time to go and see the famous bridge - besides, it wouldn't be proper while Adriana was still in the hospital. But she made herself the promise that that first time she would ever walk that bridge, it would be with her daughter . . .

Then one day, doctors allowed Adriana to leave the hospital, at least for few hours. The happy mother could fulfill her promise: the first place they have seen was Charles' Bridge. She will never forget that moment - it was so beautiful, it was like a dream. They could not pick more proper place: the white swans on the river, the silent saints on the bridge and the panorama of an old castle, the castle fit to host the princess, the one as beautiful as her daughter. The castle looked like the one from *Winter Tale*, from the land which Shakespeare there also called *Bohemia*. Mother and daughter hugged each other and their tears sealed their moment of happiness. They also met again with those missionaries from Spain and went to one *hospoda* (pub) to celebrate the event with good Czech beer. The priest's name was Alberto and needless to say, today he is still a good friend.

Adriana returned back to hospital and her mother went to her apartment Na Zborenci, where she sat with two real friends of Adriana: Sonia and Karel, and they talked all the night. Then, at five in the morning, they went out for a walk. It was raining, but it didn't matter: they went across the bridge, down to Kampa island, then to beautiful Wallenstein garden and back to National Theatre on the other bank of the river. They ended up on Wenceslaus Square, named after another Czech Saint, whose riding statue was dominating the plaza. It was early Sunday morning, with no people on the streets and everything looked so peacefully, almost unreal. Deeply touched with the magic of the moment, Analena and her friends embraced each other. It was like an ecstasy, it was like a magic - maybe because her daughter was feeling better, maybe because she just realized how good friends Adriana had - it was a moment of sheer happiness.

Again, Adriana was released for few more days and they both decided to see more of the country: to visit *Karlstejn castle*, the majestic building looking down upon the valley with a sleepy river and old oak trees. No wonder the sight was dear to emperor's Charles' heart and he built there castle so beautiful that it later became the national heritage place.

They also visited Plzen, the town of Adriana's hosting family, famous for the worldwide known *Pilsener* beer. The city sky was usually covered with clouds and Adriana used to call it "my gray Plzen". When they arrived there however, the sky was suddenly blue and sunny - so blue that Analena still claims she never ever saw the sky so bright. It was like a promise of the renewed hope, the hope for both of them . . .

Five days later, doctors allowed Adriana to return to her home country. They boarded the plane and Analena cried again. Those few nice days before their departure were suddenly more happiness than she could ever stand. How nice it would be to remain there - if only things were different, if the cruel fate would not interfere. She cried for all bad and happy days they spent there, she cried because they both were leaving good friends and , as the saying goes, "the friend in need is the friend indeed". She spent three months in that country and was grateful to the people who were trying to help her. And she knew she was leaving them for good and may never see them again.

They landed in Maracaibo; they were home and happy, for a while at least. But the past caught up with them soon - the sadness and pain and the worries, the bad dream which became the reality. Five months after arrival, Adriana died, only nineteen years old. The date was 28th November, 1995. The cruel fate has blown away the flame of the candle so young and fragile. The girl who hoped for so much in her life and at the end would settle just for having nothing else but her own life back, was denied even that.

But she will never be forgotten. Not only by Analena or her friends - there are many people who met her, who knew her, who liked her. And whom she liked as well, all those people without names, who were trying to help Adriana and her mother. It took long time before Analena was able to talk about it again. The pain in her heart was too deep, too strong.

Then, the memories of good times were coming back again: the moments from Adriana's childhood, games, school years, and even those from Bohemia: the old bridge, swans, medieval city and friends. And you know what? Eventually, those good memories prevailed, took over and firmly settled in Analena's memory. Today, Analena thinks about Adriana like if she is still there, alive and good people of Prague take care of her

little darling. In Prague, the city with the castle from the Winter Tale, with the old bridge, decorated with silent saints and white swans on the river . . .

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SHORT STORY: ALL THE BELLS OF HELENA.

High above Helena, which is the capital of Montana, in the middle of Rocky Mountains and near the Great Divide - which splits our continent so that all rivers to the west of it drain their waters to the Pacific Ocean - high up there is MacDonald Pass with the *Frontier Town*. According to the Tourist Guide, the town is a replica of some western pioneer village, and it was created by local enthusiast, sometime at the beginning of this century. He built the whole place, using only lumber and simple tools. No wonder it took quite a number of years to finish it.

We found the place without any problems, but to our surprise it looked deserted. The main gate was locked and on ly the notice nailed to the door announced that visits were allowed by appointment only. There was no phone number where we could call, but it didn't matter anyway, as we were supposed to leave Helena for Bozeman the very next day and there was not enough time to make the arrangements. Being inquisitive by nature, I walked around the palisade which surrounded the village, or rather a small fortress containing several houses and a little chapel. After a while I found the rear door and - just in case anybo dy was in - I pulled the short string hanging from the wall, probably serving as a doorbell. To my surprise the bell which rung was the big bell in the church tower, braking the silence and sounding loud and clear.

I entered and some guardian dog, disturbed by the noise and apparently mistaken about my intentions, came to me wagging its tail and expecting his supper. The doors in one of those houses opened wide and one man appeared and walked toward us. He looked more like *Billy the Kid*, rather young and apparently not too friendly. There of course the similarity ended: he was not leaning on his rifle like Bill did, at least in his famous photograph, and he certainly wasn't dressed to kill, if you pardon the pun.

With a little improvisation, I immediately lied that I came to make an appointment, but our fellow obviously wasn't the social type and informed me that he is not giving any tours. Vlasta - that's my wife - being more practical, came to my help and asked him if we could come in and look around. Or maybe she was just curious about that chapel, but it does not matter, since she would not admit it to me anyway.

"Well, you are already in," said the man ironically, but surprisingly enough he gave us his permission. "But don't go inside those houses," he added, which was only to show

that he didn't have too much trust in us. So we walked around and snapped some photos, while he lit his cigarette with rather shaking hand. He then started to feed his hungry dog and didn't pay any attention to us.

The place was really nice and in good shape, not like the remains of the houses in ghost town called Marysville, which we visited a day before. The fort had two high towers by the main gate, but of course there was no guard there. The flagpole had no flag either - sure sign that the garrison surrendered a long time ago to the attacks of civilization. Curiously enough, it all reminded me a scene from the movie *Beau Geste*, the scene inside the "fortress of dead". Only a little pond full of green algae suggested that there was some life in that place. And no wonder: being almost one hundred years old, the place truly reminded us the times when Indians were still roaming around on their mustangs - with four legs instead four wheels, if you know what i mean. On the second look, even our Billy seemed to be out of place and out of time. When I walked by one of those log cabins and saw a computer behind one of those windows, I somehow felt it did not belong there either.

Outside the fort, there was a large loghouse, which was once serving as a restaurant, but now was empty and the door was locked. Instead of pillars, there were four huge boulders in the corners, supporting the roof. The Travel Guide, where I learned about that place, claimed that through the large windows there one could see as far as seventy miles. We were not able to confirm it however, since we were only allowed to look inside, not the other way around. There were several heavy, oak tables in the dining room, with many chairs which could seat at least a hundred people. There were some photographs on the walls, very old and with very dignified faces, probably those of the guests, who used to sit there regularly or occasionally. There was no fire in the large, stony fireplace and only the setting sun was painting everything red and casting long shadows on the lonely tables, probably deserted for very long time.

On our way back to town we stopped at one of Helena's ice-cream parlors. Vlasta couldn't help asking the owner about that mysterious fortress in the mountains. " Well," said that good man, " it used to be a very famous place, especially the restaurant was popular for the big parties and the chapel, where many wedding ceremonies were performed. People used to come from far away; it was very romantic, you know. And then one day, the owner suddenly died. His widow took over and cared for the place for some time, but then she finally followed her husband as well. For a long time again, the place was deserted. Quite recently however, I heard that some computer wizard bought the place. But that's all I know - I haven't heard anything about him not letting people in."

Next day, we were on our way again, but somehow, we were not allowed to forget that

boy with his self-imposed seclusion, the boy who, similarly to Billy the Kid, had his quarrel with the society. Later on our travels, by some strange fate, we visited a small town down in New Mexico, called [Mesilla](#), the place where Billy was caught and sentenced to be hanged. Kid somehow managed to break and run away, only to be eventually shot down by *Pat Garrett*, his former friend. At that time, Pat was already on the side of law and Billy wasn't idle either: he already killed quite a number of decent men. And maybe, just maybe, his soul still cannot find peace and hangs around somewhere, maybe right there, in the fort of that Frontier Town.

But it is more likely that we just happened to talk to the real computer *wiz-kid* the shopkeeper was telling us about. And now, when the holiday season is coming, another strange thing happened: I had a dream and in it, I saw our Billy who, driven by some sudden impulse, left his programming terminal, turned off his computer and opened the main gate to his fort. The dream stopped right there, but there is nothing which will prevent me to continue the story as I see it fit. And I see it quite clearly: he will step outside and he'll be watching the northern lights above - for a while anyway - and then he will start shoveling the snow to clear the way to his deserted restaurant. He will bring some firewood and light the fire in the big stony fireplace. After so many years, the flames will be again dancing on the walls and will color everything red as the setting sun did when we were there. He will then sit down in one of those old chairs, right next to the fireplace - one solitary man in the large and empty room. His shaking hands will light the cigarette and the lonely man will throw a big meat-bone to his lonely dog. And maybe, just maybe, he will even pat him on the head.

When that happens, the guests on those old photographs will suddenly step down, sit around those heavy tables and the chap who built this place will be there too. And his widow will be bringing the holiday meal, the very same meal she used to make every Christmas. Then the main door will open and here comes Pat Garrett followed by Billy the Kid. Laughing together the way they used to when they were still friends, they will be knocking off the snow from each other shoulders. And in that very moment, the bell in the chapel will start ringing - suddenly, just by itself - and from the valley, deep below, it will be answered by all the bells of Helena . . .

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INCLINATIONS: HPC - CIMRMAN AND PARALLEL COMPUTING (by Jana Vasiljev)

Let me quote here the devoted cimrmanolog Jan Rehacek (his page is [here](#)):

Jara (da) Cimrman is a half-forgotten Czech genius, whose monumental work has been

accidentally discovered in sixties by the so-called "Liptakov explosion" (Liptakov was Cimrman's favorite resort). Information about the origins of the Cimrman phenomenon in the Czech culture can be found via Prague Stage. Today Cimrman's name is mostly associated with the group of researchers lead by Ladislav SMOLJAK and Zdenek SVERAK (worldknown from the movie "**Kolya**"). Their findings about Cimrman are considered canonical and some of them can be found on the Home Page of "The Theater of Jara CIMRMAN" (only a Czech version). Cimrman's Philosophical MetaAxiom is: "If you think, think again").

Note: For those who still wonder - Jara (da) Cimrman is of course only a fiction, but the movement around him is quite real, actually even more than real.

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was born and grew up in Prague. Graduated at the **Czech University of Technology (CVUT)** at the Electrotechnical Faculty. Married Anatole, the son of a Russian refugee. That way she acquired her family name, which surprisingly was not especially popular in Russia-dominated Czechoslovakia (so handsome he was). They both left Czechoslovakia in September 1968, after Russian invasion, and settled in Holland, where she became a computer programmer because she could not speak the native Dutch language. After years of combining free-lancing and house-wifing she got a job at the **Computing Center of the Delft University of Technology**. The last years she has been a system administrator of the DUT supercomputers.

A couple of years ago when surfing on the Internet she came across great Cimrman's articles on the site of the Electrotechnical faculty of the CVUT. These inspired her to do her own scientific research in the field of Cimrmanology which resulted in writing the article about the "High Performance Cimrman's" computing machines, HPC. Her WEB page is <http://www.rc.tudelft.nl/~rcpsj/va/>. She is also the author of the following article.

High Performance Computing.

The need for high performance supercomputers to process huge amounts of technical data and to perform time critical computations has been recognized in technological research, industry and weather forecasting for many decades.

Today, on our way to the multimedia information highways, we are witnessing the growing need for super fast servers in other fields of science, like e.g. the entertainment industry, as well. More and more people are daily confronted with the Great Challenges

that can be solved solely with the use of HPC technology.

Therefore the time has become ripe for the broad audience to know that the genius Jarda Cimrman played a very important role at the birth of the first generation of supercomputers, which is an unquestionable fact that has already been acknowledged by the world leading manufacturers of the High Performance Computers.

Cimrman and parallel computing.

One of the JdC's great hobbies was picking mushrooms in the woods. That led him to make studies of mushroom behavior by using numerical models. After he had discovered the influence of the humidity on mushroom growth he became interested in the weather forecasting and through this interest he started exchanging ideas with the originator of numerical methods applications for weather forecasting, Lewis Fry Richardson, who was then professor in Cambridge. Years later, in the twenties, Richardson published some of these ideas in his remarkable book [1]:

"Imagine a large hall like a theatre, except that the circles and galleries go right round the space usually occupied by the stage. The walls in this chamber are painted to form a map of the globe. The ceiling represents the north polar regions, England is in the gallery, the tropics in the upper circle, Australia on the dress circle and the antarctic in the pit. A myriad computers are at work upon the weather of the part of the map where each sits, but each computer attends only to one equation or part of an equation."

JdC, who had rather deep-rooted propensity of thinking practically, saw instantly how this concept of parallel computing can be implemented. He designed a parallel algorithm for sorting a randomized deck of poker cards and used it at school where he was teaching mathematics in parallel classes by equipping all pupils with in Russia still so popular abacuci (pronounce "schots") and by dividing the processes among them. The abacus, which is a frame with sliding balls on wires, resembling vectors, became thus presumably the first vector processor ever used for this purpose. By employing them, JdC uniquely combined two of the contemporary used High Performance Computer architectures in one system. It was a vector multiprocessor- as well as Massively Parallel Processor- computer at the same time.

Evidently the system was scalable, because it could handle the birth explosion of that period. To our great regret, no information is available so far either about the precision of the results that were obtained on this system, neither about the interconnecting network topology used. It has been, however, proven without any doubt, that he implemented both a shared-memory as well as a distributed-memory models. By the first approach one pupil (with the largest head) was designated as a memory and by the

second one, if we are to believe some rather unreliable sources, Cimrman used his dog for message-passing. The dog was called by everybody "Master's Pet Iwan" (MPI). Cimrman also designed a parallel algorithm for solving the well known "Weeding Children" Problem and applied it for the school garden.

HPC manufacturers and Cimrman.

A not fully confirmed story makes the rounds that JdC was exchanging his ideas about massively parallel computing also with a friend, who was a father of a designer of one of the first MPP of our time, Illiac IV.

This friend had a Russian footman who was called Ilja (pronounce Illia) after his godfather who was a father of one of the greatest selfproclaimed humanists of this century, Vladimir Iljic Lenin. The theory held by some people, that Ilja was a butler, is proven not be true, because this Ilja was famous for his shoe shining, which could not possibly be a task of a butler. But this is further not relevant for the rest of our story.

It is only the fact that Jara da Cimrman, because he at that time lived in Russia, was jokingly called "Illia" by his friend. His friend's son did not know that this was not the Master's real name and so when he later decided to pay homage to our great Master after designing his computer he called it IlliaC(imrman).

There is no need to say more about the origin of the name for Cimrman Machines CM-2 and CM-5 of the Thinking Machine Corporation or Cimrman C- series of vect or supercomputers made by CRAY and Convex. Many other HPC manufacturers use in their machines fast Cimrman Processing

The HPC technology is going through a revolutionary development in these days. Its founder, Jara da Cimrman, though a visionary genius, probably in his time did not imagine that the principles he developed would lead to the realization of Teraflops computers.

Bibliography: [1] Weather Prediction by Numerical Process, L F Richardson, London: Cambridge University Press, 1922

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